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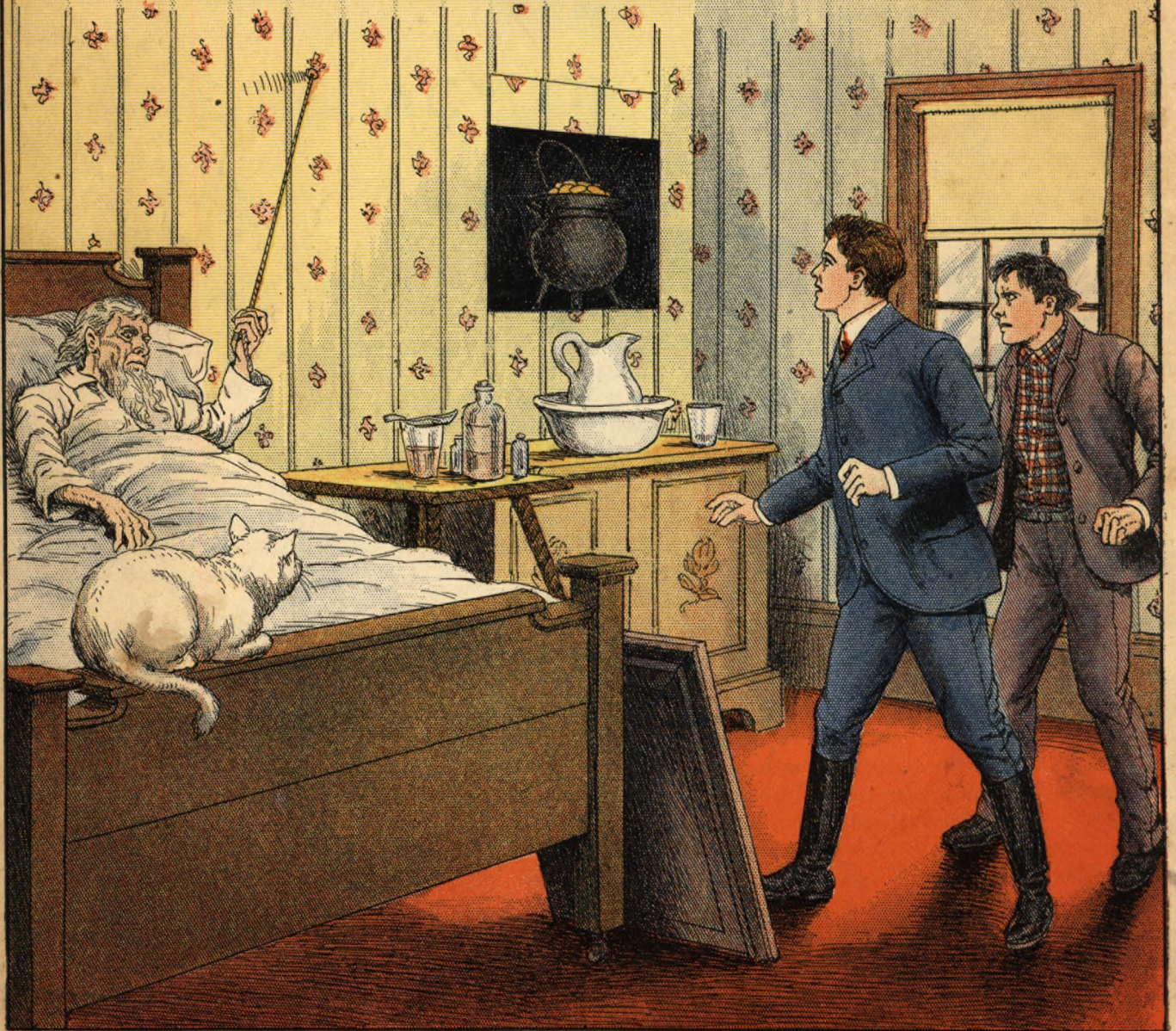
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AND

FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

A POT OF MONEY; OR, THE LEGACY OF A LUCKY BOY. *By A SELF-MADE MAN.*



"Look!" he exclaimed, giving the rope a tug. To the amazement of Dick and Bob a nicely-adjusted panel slid noiselessly upward, exposing a recess in the wall. A three-legged iron pot full of glittering coin stood exposed.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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A POT OF MONEY

OR,

THE LEGACY OF A LUCKY BOY

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

A WILD NIGHT ON THE COAST.

"It's a wild night, Rachel," said Isaac Bloom, trying to peer through the thick pane of a window that looked seaward from a little weather-beaten cottage on the summit of Bird Point, a promontory that projected into the Atlantic Ocean upon the rugged and surf-lashed coast of the State of Maine. "Yes," he continued, "there have been many wild nights on this coast since we came here to live, Rachel, but none wilder than the anniversary of this day, twelve years ago, when the yacht Sunbeam went ashore on these rocks and all perished except," he paused, as if something had gripped him by the throat, "that boy," he added after a moment.

The woman, the only other occupant of the room, who was laying the table for the evening meal, did not answer, but she seemed to catch her breath, and a shudder ran through her frame.

She was not a pleasant-looking woman, this Rachel Bloom.

She was old and haggard, and her features were hard and unsympathetic.

Neither was Isaac Bloom a cheerful-looking man.

He was old, too, and just as haggard as his wife.

His face might have furnished a text for a sermon, for it showed the impress of many passions, subdued somewhat by age, the chief of which seemed to be avarice.

Yes, it was a wild night truly, just as Isaac Bloom had remarked.

The wind swept around Bird Point with the force of a young gale, coming up with a roar and a swoop from the leaping, moaning sea, and seemed to exhaust itself just at this point where the jagged black rocks shot their heads out of a boiling waste of foam.

So dark was it without that Isaac Bloom's face was reflected in the ebony pane, and he could see nothing of the tossing, foaming waves that ran hither and thither from the shore far out to sea; nor could he make out the black, driving banks of clouds that obscured the sky above.

The man turned away from the window and went to the yawning open fireplace where part of a log supported a heap of blazing driftwood he had gathered from the shore.

Such a fire, diffusing a cheerful glow, looked comfortable on a night like this.

There was no satisfaction in the old man's face, however, as he half-crouched over the flames and warmed his skinny, mahogany-hued hands in the heat.

The wind pounced upon the cottage at intervals like a terrier might a rat, and shook the building just as roughly, but it seemed not to affect either the old man or his wife.

Both were accustomed to wild gales on the coast, and nothing short of the house being actually carried away would have disturbed them.

Nothing like that, however, was likely to happen, as it was too well anchored among the rocks.

The cottage was a rambling one-story structure consist-

ing of several rooms, of which the one in question was the principal, or living, room.

Behind it, and extending into a hollow of a section of the cliff, was a long room used for sleeping purposes by the occupants of the house, being roughly partitioned off in sections; while a small L to one side was provided with a stove and cooking utensils.

In the kitchen at that moment were two boys—one a bright, good-looking and open-featured youth of seventeen, known as Dick Adams, who had evidently come of good stock; the other a rough, sandy-complexioned boy of sixteen, named Bob Smithers, who showed that he sprung from a very humble order of society.

There was all the difference in the world between the boys, and yet they were sworn friends and comrades.

"It's goin' to be a tough night on the water," said Smithers, who, in common with the old man in the next room, had been trying to pierce the seascape from a single-paned window, but with no more success, to Dick Adams, who was cooking a mess of fish and some fried potatoes on the stove.

"I'll bet it will," replied Dick, cheerfully, for nothing seemed to disturb his sunny disposition.

"The old man has his customary grouch on to-night," said Bob, turning from the window and looking at his companion.

"I know he has," replied Dick. "I've noticed it is always worse when the wind pipes from the sou'-east."

"And the direction of the wind seems to have the same effect on the old woman," answered Smithers, with a grin, as if the fact didn't worry him greatly.

"Just as the new moon has a bad effect on some people, so I've heard," said Dick, as he turned the potatoes in the pan.

"That's right. Old Jack Pilchard in the cove is always affected when the moon is young. He acts crazy for more'n a week, then he gets over it and is all right till the next new moon. Funny, isn't it?"

"It is kind of strange. As for the old man Bloom and his wife," added Dick, in a kind of mysterious stage whisper, after casting a wary glance at the door, "I think it isn't the wind, but a case of conscience with them."

"Conscience!" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes. Something that the wind from the sou'-east reminds them of."

"Do you know what that is?"

"No, I don't."

"And yet you've lived with them for twelve years, ever since you was a little kid."

"I have."

"You ought to have been able to size 'em up pretty well in that time."

"As they've treated me pretty well, all things considered, I've never tried to find out what wasn't my business."

"But if there was anythin' wrong about 'em I should think you'd have got a line on it. You know they've got an awful hard reputation in the village. I've heard people say——"

Smithers broke off suddenly and began to whistle, for Rachel Bloom appeared in the doorway at that moment and walked over to the stove.

"The fish and potatoes are done to a turn, Mother Rachel," said Dick, with a furtive glance at her forbidding face. "Shall I dish them up?"

The old woman nodded.

The boy got a couple of platters and transferred to them the contents of the two pans, while Mrs. Bloom lifted the teapot from the stove.

"Here, Bob, get busy," said Dick. "Carry the fish inside and I'll follow with the potatoes."

The boys started in single file for the living-room, and Rachel Bloom followed with the teapot.

Then Dick went back for the bread and Bob accompanied him.

The former sliced up the remainder of one of Rachel Bloom's home-made loaves, and heaping it on a plate handed it to Bob to carry.

At that moment a tremendous gust shook the cottage to its foundations, and the rain began to patter against the window.

"I guess we won't go down to the village to-night, Dick," remarked Bob.

"Well, I don't know. I promised Lou I'd call and see her."

"She won't expect you to keep your word in such a gale as this. It'll be much worse by and by."

"I don't mind the wind nor the rain when I've got my oilskins on, and the path is sheltered by the wood."

"Well, if you go I'll go, of course. I wouldn't stay alone with the old man and his wife when the wind's from the sou'-east for a farm," said Bob, with a grimace.

"I don't blame you, Bob. They look as ugly as sin to-night."

"I should say they do. You don't seem afraid of them at any stage of the game."

"Why should I? No matter how surly they are at times they never say a word to me. I can go and come when I choose, and they never make a kick."

"Yes, they treat you first-rate. Been a kind of father and mother to you ever since the old man picked you up on the beach below, a waif of the sea, twelve years ago. How came he to call you Dick Adams? Why not Dick Bloom?"

"Because he told me that was my name."

"How did he know 'twas your name? You were the only one that came ashore after the wreck of some craft. At least so I've heard my old man say."

"And how did your father know I was the only one?"

"Isaac Bloom told him and others so."

"Well, the old man ought to know, seeing he was on the beach that night."

"And he was the only one who was on that section of the shore at the time."

"Which goes to prove that he is the only one who should know the particulars. Take the bread in and we'll have our supper. I'm hungry."

"So am I, but I'd rather eat in here with you if I could."

"Well, we can eat in here very well, so start ahead."

Isaac Bloom and his wife were already at the table and had helped themselves.

The boys sat down and helped themselves.

The meal proceeded in silence.

Neither of the lads felt disposed to speak, owing to the somber attitude of the old man and his wife.

The wind howled like a legion of uncanny spirits striving for an entrance, and the rain beat furiously against the seaward side of the house, while during the intermittent lulls in the gale the roll-call of the surf on the shore below rose like the bass note of some grand organ.

When the meal was finished the boys carried the dishes into the kitchen and washed them, while the old woman tidied up the living-room, and Isaac himself drew a chair up before the open fireplace and lit his pipe.

"Have you decided to call on Lou Baker to-night?" asked Bob, as he polished the plates one after the other.

"I have. The gale seems to be holding pretty steady now. It isn't more than half a one, anyway. It has almost stopped raining, too."

"Then I'm with you."

The boys cleaned things up and passed into the back room for their oilskins.

These they donned and returned to the living-room.

"I'm going down to the village, Mother Rachel," said Dick, "and Bob is going with me. We're going to call at the Bakers'."

The old woman, who had taken a chair on the side of the fireplace opposite to her husband, merely nodded.

"We'll be back about ten, or maybe not till half-past," added Dick.

At that moment, as they turned to go, another fierce gust caused the cottage to rock and tremble, and in the midst of it there came a loud knocking at the door.

CHAPTER II.

THE STRANGER.

Dick opened the door, admitting a gust of cold air and a stranger.

He was an elderly man, muffled up to his chin in a thick overcoat, with a soft black hat pulled down over his forehead, and in his hand he carried a stout traveling bag.

He was pretty thoroughly drenched by the rain, however, and his face looked red from the flogging the wind had administered to it.

"I am a stranger in these parts," said the visitor, "and crave shelter until the storm is over. I am prepared to pay liberally for the accommodation."

Isaac Bloom and his wife had both looked up when the knocking came to the door, and they had regarded the stranger's entrance with very black looks, but when he said he was willing to pay for such accommodation as they were

willing to extend to him they both cast a searching look at the man and then their eyes met significantly.

The old man got up with unwonted agility for him, and, advancing to the visitor, said that he could remain, as he would not turn a dog out on such a night.

Dick and Bob both looked at Isaac Bloom in surprise, for his manner had suddenly become uncommonly friendly.

He had masked his surliness under a wrinkled smile, and he offered to take the stranger's hat and bag.

The visitor handed him the hat, but the bag he held on to, placing it between his feet, while Dick assisted him off with his overcoat, and Bob pushed a chair before the blazing hearth.

Dick hung the soaked coat up where the heat would soon dry it and was turning to leave the cottage when the stranger, who had taken possession of the chair, after placing his bag carefully underneath it, as if he didn't want to let it out of his reach, looked at him in the full glare of the light.

He uttered an exclamation of astonishment, and half rose in his chair, as his eyes fixed themselves on Dick's face.

Isaac Bloom and his wife couldn't help noticing the exclamation and the action that accompanied it, and both were seized with a strange agitation that betrayed itself not only in their manner, but in the livid look that spread over their faces.

Dick stared at the stranger in some surprise, and consequently did not notice the effect produced on Isaac and Rachel Bloom.

Bob Smithers, however, noticed their sudden consternation, and wondered what had occasioned it.

"What is your name, boy?" asked the stranger, in an eager, tense way.

"My name, sir? Dick Adams."

A look of disappointment came over the man's features and he sat down again.

Yet he could not remove his eyes from Dick's face.

"How like," he murmured inaudibly. "How like."

"Come along, Bob, it's time we were going," said Dick, making for the door, which presently closed behind them both.

"Say, Dick, what was the matter? What caused that man to rise in his chair and look at you in such a funny way?" said Bob, as soon as they had covered with some difficulty a bare stretch of the cliff and reached the shelter of the wood.

"How should I know? I never saw him before in my life."

"He must have known somebody that looked exactly like you, for he asked you your name just as if he expected to recognize you."

"I know he did, and it surprised me."

"He was greatly disappointed when you said your name was Dick Adams. I heard him mutter something to himself as he sat down, but I couldn't catch what it was."

"They say everybody has his double in this world," laughed Dick. "I suppose he's met mine somewhere, and he took me for that person at first sight."

"He took you for somebody he's met before—there's no doubt of that. I wonder who he is, and what brought him to this neighborhood?"

"I give it up. Whoever he is, he must have lost his way along the cliffs. It is rather singular he should be wandering around this vicinity, anyway. Possibly he came over from Macchias and is bound for Oldport. Being overtaken by the storm and darkness he got all mixed up. That's the only way I can account for his presence in this out-of-the-way locality."

"We don't often have strangers at this season of the year. He must have had some object in coming this way."

"Of course; but that's his business, not ours."

The boys walked on awhile in silence.

The rain had ceased for the time being, but the roar of the gale still continued, though the trees broke its force as far as the boys were concerned.

"I'm glad I'm not out on the water to-night," said Dick, at length.

"Me, too," replied Bob. "It was in just this sort of gale that my old man went down with his crew on the sloop. If mother was alive she'd have the blues to-night."

"I suppose it was the sea that made an orphan of me, too," said Dick, soberly.

"I wouldn't be surprised. The people in the village seem to think that way; but old Bloom is so close-mouthed that nobody has been able to find out anything about you except that you were washed up on the rocks during a heavy gale when you were five years old. Hasn't the old man ever told you anything?"

"Nothing except what you have just said. I asked him what kind of a vessel it was that was wrecked at the time, but he said he didn't know. I asked him if anybody else came ashore but me, and he said no. So I guess the mystery which surrounds me will always remain one."

"Seems that way if Bloom really knows nothing."

"He and Mother Rachel have always treated me pretty well, but they are so queer in their ways at times that I'm getting tired of living with them."

"Are you thinkin' of leavin' them?" asked Bob, in some surprise.

"Well, I want to go out into the big world and make my own way. This kind of life I'm leading doesn't suit me at all."

"Are you thinkin' of shippin' aboard a fishing craft?"

"Not on your life, Bob. The sea has no charms for me. If I was sure that it made a nameless orphan of me I should hate it."

"I wouldn't blame you much."

"Ever since I read that book from the village library—the lives of our great merchants, inventors and capitalists—I've become ambitious to go to some city and make a start in life. I believe it's in me to succeed. Here I am idle more than half my time. Only when you and I are out fishing for something to put on the table do I take any interest in life. I told the old man one day what I wanted to do, but he discouraged me. He said that he and Mother

Rachel are getting old, and that as he saved my life it is my duty to stay by them and support them. He said they'd starve only for me, as they have very little money saved. Of course I can't help being grateful for what they've done for me. They've let me go to school as long as school kept, and they've let me have my own way. I can't bring myself to leave them in the lurch. So you see what I'm up against."

"That's right," admitted Bob.

"There's one thing that puzzles me, however," went on Dick.

"What's that?"

"The old man hinted one day to me that when he and Mother Rachel are dead that I'll be well provided for."

"By whom?" asked Bob, in some astonishment.

"That's what I couldn't make out. He wouldn't give me any satisfaction. All he would say was that I should come into a pot of money."

"A pot of money!"

"Those were his exact words."

"Where is this pot of money coming from?"

"That's what I asked him, but he shook his head and was silent."

"He's off his chump, I guess."

"I guess he must be, for if he had a pot of money to leave me we needn't be living from hand-to-mouth as we are."

"That's common-sense."

They were now descending a sheltered part of the cliff by a rude path which led to the village, at the upper end of which, near the church, was the best dwelling in the place, the home of a retired and well-to-do fisherman named Samuel Baker.

Mr. Baker was a man of more than ordinary intelligence, who had begun life as a boy on a mackerel smack, when this fish was almost exclusively hunted for on the Grand Banks.

He saved his money and in time bought an interest in a sloop, then the whole sloop, then an interest in a second, and soon after a third.

Having acquired something of a competence he concluded to marry, and did.

After a time he built for himself and family what was considered a fine house, retired from active work as a mackerel catcher, and let others do the work for him.

Now he owned half the vessels that sailed out of Oldport, and lived like a king, at his ease.

His greatest treasure, however, was his fifteen-year-old daughter Louise, known and addressed as Lou.

She was the great attraction for every boy who had spunk enough to make up to her, but there was only one lad she cared anything for, and that was Dick Adams.

She recognized that he was turned out of a different mold from the other boys who had been born and brought up in Oldport.

He was far brighter, more intelligent, with the manners of a real gentleman.

The very fact that his origin was involved in an im-

penetrable mystery attracted her to him as nothing else perhaps would.

Her father also recognized the lad's excellent qualities that made him the peer of his companions, and acquired a strong liking for him.

The only thing that was at all against Dick was the fact that he lived with, and was consequently considered as one of, the Blooms, and the Blooms bore a mighty scaly reputation in Oldport.

Nevertheless, Dick managed to conquer the early antipathy the villagers evinced toward him on account of his undesirable connections, and he had now become an acknowledged favorite.

Samuel Baker and his good wife saw ere long that a growing fondness existed between Dick and their daughter Lou, but instead of trying to nip it in the bud, they said nothing and let things take their course.

Consequently Dick was a welcome visitor at the Baker home.

That's where he and Bob were bound to-night, prepared to spend a pleasant evening, for Miss Lou was bright and vivacious, and knew how to entertain her visitors whenever they came.

Notwithstanding that a heavy gale swooped down on the coast with the setting of the sun, and that the night was about as inclement as it well could be, she was sure, for reasons of her own, that Dick Adams wouldn't stay away on that account after he had promised to call.

She rather enjoyed the influence she exercised over her boy lover, which was woman-like, of course, and felt a secret satisfaction in the knowledge that she was the whole thing with Dick, and could, so to speak, wind him around her finger.

So it was no surprise to her when Dick and Bob appeared in their oilskins, like a couple of young men from the sea, and welcomed them just as if it was the most natural thing in the world that they should call on such a night.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOSPITALITY OF THE BLOOMS.

After Dick and Bob had left the cottage on the cliff, Isaac and Rachel Bloom laid themselves out to entertain their unexpected visitor.

The gloom and surliness that had enveloped them since the wind set in from the southeast that evening, bringing the gale down with it, dropped away from them like a garment put aside.

This would have been a matter of astonishment to any one who knew the real character of the Blooms.

Rachel went into the kitchen, stirred up the expiring embers in the stove, and prepared a cup of steaming hot tea for the stranger.

She also cooked a fresh fish and set out one end of the table for his special accommodation.

The visitor expressed his gratitude for the service they were rendering him, and said he would insist on paying for it, for he was well able to do so, whereupon Isaac and Rachel looked at each other again, and the smile that irradiated their uncouth features for a moment was not a pleasant nor a reassuring one.

The warmth of the room and the apparent hospitality of the Blooms encouraged the stranger to talk.

He said that his name was John Fisher; that he was a lawyer by profession, and lived in Boston, where he had a lucrative business.

"An important matter brings me down to this part of Maine," he went on, after he had finished his meal, which gave him great satisfaction, as he had been very hungry. "I want to pick up some information about a marine disaster which I have only lately discovered happened somewhere along this coast about twelve years ago. I refer to the wreck of the private yacht Sunbeam."

As the words left his mouth a kind of spasm crossed the features of both Isaac and Rachel Bloom, and each shot a look at the lawyer that seemed to bode him no good.

"How long have you lived in this cottage, Mr. Bloom?" asked the visitor.

It was a moment or two before the old man could frame an answer to the question, and the gentleman was about to repeat it, thinking he might be deaf, when Isaac mumbled out: "Ten years."

Mr. Fisher was clearly disappointed by the reply.

"Did you live anywhere else in this neighborhood prior to your occupancy of this cottage?"

"No."

"Then I suppose you know nothing whatever about the wreck of the Sunbeam?"

"Nothing at all."

"Too bad," replied the lawyer, earnestly. "I was in hopes that you might be able to throw some light on my quest."

An awkward silence ensued that was at length broken by the old man, who said:

"How are you interested in the wreck of the yacht Sunbeam?"

"Because an old friend, who was a client of mine, his wife and little boy, were aboard of that vessel. After the yacht failed to turn up within a reasonable time, efforts were made by me, and others interested in their fate, to find out what had happened to the vessel; but until recently not the faintest clew ever came to hand that would throw light on the mystery of her disappearance. It was concluded that she had foundered at sea, and all on board lost, and after the lapse of what was considered a sufficient time, my friend's estate was administered on, and became the property of a distant relative."

"Then the owner of the yacht was a rich man, eh?" asked Isaac, eagerly.

"He was before the disaster. Unfortunately for the heir who succeeded to what he left behind him, the greater part

of his wealth was aboard the Sunbeam at the time she foundered."

"The greater part of his wealth?" repeated the old man.

"Exactly. A matter of a hundred thousand dollars in gold coin, the proceeds of a treasure-hunting expedition in a certain spot, which shall be nameless. The sea gave up the money, and then, as it appears, reclaimed it, with interest."

"You say that you lately obtained a clew to——"

Isaac Bloom paused and looked fixedly at the lawyer.

So also did Rachel.

"A week ago I received a letter from a man signing himself Peter Vandegrift——"

"Who!" gasped Isaac Bloom, his face turning a sickly green, while Rachel seemed as if she was going to have a fit.

"Peter Vandegrift," went on the lawyer, who was looking into the fire and did not observe the agitation of the Blooms. "He asked me to meet him at the Sheet Anchor Inn in the village of Oldport on a certain date that he mentioned. He said that he had heard that I was interested in the fate of the yacht Sunbeam, which he affirmed foundered off the Maine coast near Oldport. He said that if I was willing to pay him well for the information he could tell me something about the loss of the said yacht that would open my eyes."

"He said that, did he?" asked Isaac Bloom, in a hard voice, while a vindictive look rested on his features.

"He did. So I came on, prepared to make terms with him."

At those words the Blooms cast a significant glance at the traveling bag under their visitor's chair, and then at each other.

"As I have no desire to pay money needlessly," continued the lawyer, "I thought I'd make a quiet investigation on my own hook in the neighborhood before presenting myself before this Vandegrift, who may be a scoundrel for aught I known to the contrary. I left the adjacent town of Macchias this afternoon, and as the day looked pleasant enough then, I decided to walk down to Oldport. It happened, however, that I missed my way, darkness and the gale overtook me, and the next thing I knew I came near walking off these cliffs into the sea, which would have finished me. Fortunately, I saw a light, and, coming toward it, discovered your cottage, at the door of which I took the liberty of knocking. That's my story as far as I've gone. How far is Oldport from here?"

"It's some distance," replied Isaac, after a glance at his wife. "You couldn't go there to-night in this gale."

"Then what am I to do?" asked the lawyer, in a perplexed tone.

"You are welcome to stay here. My wife will make you up a bed in this room. In the morning I will guide you to Oldport."

"I presume I will have to accept your kind offer, for which I am grateful. But, as I said before, you shall be handsomely repaid for your trouble. You look, pardon me for saying so, as if a five-dollar note would not come

amiss, and so it will give me great pleasure in presenting you with one."

The Blooms received this generous proposal in silence, but each looked once more at the bag under the chair as if mentally calculating what was inside of it.

"You haven't mentioned the name of the owner of the Sunbeam, who was lost, as this man Vandegrift says, off this coast," said Isaac Bloom, at length.

"His name was Warren, Jack Warren, and his little son was Jack, Jr. By the way, that boy, I think he said that his name was Dick Adams, who admitted me and then left with a companion, bears a most astonishing likeness to Mr. Warren. He's about the age, too, that Master Jack would be now if he had lived. Does he live here?"

The old man put his hand to his throat and then said "Yes."

"Not your son?" asked the lawyer, with a sharp look.

"No. My nephew."

"Ah!" and the lawyer looked into the fire again.

Presently he looked up again.

"Do you know anything about this man Peter Vandegrift?"

"I know him to be a scoundrel," replied Isaac Bloom, harshly.

"In what respect?"

"In every respect," answered the old man, fiercely.

"Well, that's pleasant. I see that I will have to be on my guard in any dealings I may have with him. What's his business?"

"He's the keeper of the lightship off the Shoals."

"What Shoals?"

"The Cinders."

"Why so called?"

"Because a British warship went ashore on 'em in 1813, took fire, and burnt to the water's edge."

"And that's why they're called The Cinders. Singular name, upon my word."

Isaac Bloom rose from his chair.

"I'll mix you a glass of toddy," he said, with a peculiar look at Rachel, which she understood and nodded. "Then you can turn in, for it's getting late, and we usually go to bed early."

"Thank you," replied the lawyer. "I am rather partial to a glass of hot spirits myself, but I thought," with a dry laugh, "that such a thing was not to be found in Maine, for it is a prohibition State."

The old man made no reply, but went to a cupboard, where he stood for a few moments with his back to his visitor, while Rachel busied herself with bringing into the room one of the mattresses they used on their own bed, and a sheet and blanket, together with a coarse pillow.

She made the bed within range of the fire's glow, and then left the room.

Presently she returned with a steaming kettle and poured the water into the three glasses, one of which stood a little apart from the others, into which her husband poured some of the contents of a round-bellied stone jug.

He stirred each of the glasses, after adding a little sugar, and then pushed one toward his wife, a second he took himself, and the one which had stood apart he handed to their visitor.

"You will sleep sound after drinking that," he said, with a meaning look at Rachel.

"I dare say," replied Mr. Fisher, laughingly. "I ought to after the tramp I've had this afternoon."

With that he put the glass to his lips.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CRIME AND THE BLUNDER.

Isaac and Rachel Bloom watched the lawyer out of the corner of their eyes as he drained his glass, smacked his lips to express his satisfaction, and then handed the empty glass back to the old man.

"That's good liquor," he remarked, "and goes to the right spot."

"Yonder is your bed," said Isaac Bloom. "You can retire to it at once if you wish for we are going to bed."

"Thank you. Good night," replied Mr. Fisher.

In another moment he was alone.

"What a lonesome spot for a house," said the lawyer to himself. "And how bleak in the winter. Hark, how the wind blows! It must have been just such a night that the Sunbeam went ashore on this coast, and that was twelve years ago. Dear me, I'm beginning to feel uncommonly sleepy," added the Boston man, with a yawn. "What a startling resemblance that boy Dick Adams bears to dead and gone Jack Warren. One would think he really was Warren's son. And the yacht went ashore near here, too. If it wasn't that the old man said that the lad was his nephew, I'd have a strong suspicion that it was Master Jack, Jr., who had been saved from the sea. Dear me, my head seems to be going around. That must have been uncommonly strong liquor. Yet it oughtn't to have such an effect on me, for I am used to spirits. At least one glass shouldn't—what can be the matter with me? My head is buzzing like a sawmill. I must have overexerted myself, or perhaps I've caught a severe cold in the rain. That must be it."

He nearly fell over the chair as he reached for his bag.

"Lord, how dizzy I am! I had better put this bag under my pillow. These people are probably all right, but it will be safer under my pillow. Any one trying to disturb it then would be apt to wake me up."

He started toward the bed while speaking to himself, but instead of reaching the head of it at which he aimed he stumbled over the foot and fell at full length on it with the grip still in his fingers.

He made one ineffectual attempt to get up, and then lay still, staring stupidly at the ceiling.

After a few minutes his eyes closed and he began to breathe heavily.

The lamp, which had been partly turned down by the old man before he left the room, threw a dull gleam on the lawyer's now expressionless features.

The gale had increased in intensity, and the wind now howled about the lone dwelling as though a legion of fiends were making Bird Point their playground.

Flakes of spume torn from the angry waters below were flung against the window-panes, where they glistened for a moment and vanished.

The boom of the surf was continuous and deafening.

All things considered, it was a fierce night, and was, if anything, getting worse.

Ten minutes passed away, and then the door of the sleeping-room was opened and Isaac Bloom came out in his stocking feet.

Slowly he walked toward the mattress on which lay the unconscious lawyer.

He looked down upon his visitor with malicious satisfaction.

Then to make sure that John Fisher was past all sense of feeling he bent over and shook him roughly by the shoulder.

He got no response and was satisfied.

"Come out, Rachel," he said. "It's all right."

The old woman immediately made her appearance.

"The door—have you fastened it?" she asked.

"I forgot," he replied, impatiently. "Do you attend to it."

She walked quickly to the door and turned the key in the lock.

She glanced at both of the windows on that side and saw that the shades were down.

Then she joined her husband, who was unclasping the lawyer's fingers from the handle of the bag.

"What a grip he has on it! One would think it was filled with gold."

"I hope we shall find enough money to repay us for our trouble," she said, with a gleam of avarice in her eyes.

"You think of nothing but money, Rachel," said her husband, harshly. "Money or no money, he must go over the cliff, d'ye hear? You heard him say that he has an appointment with Vandegrift at the Sheet Anchor. Probably for to-morrow. What the scoundrel has to tell about the wreck of the Sunbeam I know not. It must be lies, for surely no one but you and me, Rachel, knows that anything came out of the wreck of the yacht. We were alone on the shore that night. But Vandegrift is a shifty rascal. Who knows but he may have played the spy on us when we have been off our guard, learning a little thing now, and a little thing then, until, putting all together, he thinks he has a clew to that boy's identity."

"Impossible!" cried Rachel.

"We must waste no time in argument. Let us see what's in the bag."

It was locked.

Searching the lawyer's pockets, Isaac found a bunch of keys, and one of them fitted the lock of the traveling-bag.

In a moment it was open, and the old man's hand brought to light a package of bank bills.

"Ah, they look good!" exclaimed Rachel, making a swoop at them with her talon-like fingers. "There must be a thousand dollars in that package."

"We have no time to count them now. Hide them, quick, while I look after him. He'll sleep sound enough to-night, I'll warrant you, and for many nights hereafter, for it is his last sleep."

"Must more blood be shed, and on this night of all others?" cried Rachel, with a shudder.

"It must be, else he would learn enough in the village to-morrow to show him that I lied about the boy. The likeness of the lad to his father has already impressed him. As soon as he hears that the boy was found by me on the shore this night twelve years ago he will know at once that the craft which came on the rocks was the yacht *Sunbeam*. Lawyers are always suspicious. He would cross-examine us as to why we concealed the truth from him. One suspicion would lead to another until, perhaps, he would institute a search of the cottage to see what more he could learn. Then the gold——"

"Over the cliff with him. I care not," exclaimed Rachel, fiercely. "Our gold must never be touched by others. It is ours to count and gloat over; to fondle and love. We are rich, yes, very rich; but no one must know that—no one but us. When we are dead——"

"It shall be a legacy for the boy."

"But we're not going to die yet, Isaac. Not for a long time—a very long time. We must count that gold over many times more, and think what we could buy with it. But we'll never spend it. No, no, we'll never part with a single coin—not one."

The old woman rubbed her skinny hands together and spoke gloatingly.

"If these bills were only gold, yellow gold, too! But, no matter, it's money. Yes, it's money. Real five and ten dollar bills, every one of them. How I love them! But I'd like them better if they were gold."

She went into the sleeping-room mumbling to herself and ngering the bills.

The old man turned the light down, went to the door, unlocked it and peered out.

He saw nothing but intense darkness; heard nothing but the roaring wind and the beat of the rollers on the shore below.

Leaving the door open, he returned to the mattress, grasped the insensible lawyer in his arms, dragged him across the floor and thence out into the gloom of the night.

In a few minutes he returned alone.

"Ah! The bag—I forgot that. It must follow him."

He carried the valise outside and presently returned without it.

"Now all is safe," he muttered to himself. "We are maybe a thousand dollars richer, but best of all there's no one now to take the gold from us—no one."

Shutting the door, he dragged the mattress back into

the sleeping-room, and afterward carried in the sheet, blanket and pillow.

Then he went to the window and tried to look out on the ocean.

"His body will be carried out to sea; but if, perchance, it should come ashore it were easy to say that he must have strayed from the path and fallen from the cliff when he left here to go to the village."

At that moment the door flew open and Dick and Bob entered the room.

Isaac Bloom started for the sleeping-room, but Dick stopped him.

"The stranger is stopping here to-night, is he? Did you put him in our bed?"

"Stopping here? No, indeed; he is gone."

"Gone where?" asked Dick, in surprise.

"To—the village."

"To the village! And left his hat and overcoat?" exclaimed the boy, pointing to the two articles still hanging where they had been put to dry.

Isaac Bloom's jaw dropped and he turned livid with consternation, for those tell-tale articles of John Fisher's attire had quite escaped his attention.

CHAPTER V.

INTO THE SEA.

Dick and Bob regarded the old man's agitation with no little amazement.

"What is the matter, Mr. Bloom?" asked Dick. "What has happened?"

"Nothing—nothing," fluttered Isaac, hardly knowing what he said, so dumbfounded was he by this discovery of his dreadful blunder.

"Nothing! Something must have happened," insisted Dick. "Where is the gentleman?"

"I don't know," gasped the old man.

Dick looked at Bob, and Bob returned his stare.

The situation was most astonishing, not to say mysterious, to the two boys.

Here was the visitor's hat and overcoat and yet the man himself was not in the house, according to Isaac Bloom, but on his way to the village.

On his way to the village, hatless and coatless, in the terrible gale, why, it was simply ridiculous.

"But you just said he had gone to the village," said Dick.

At that moment Rachel appeared in the inner doorway.

"Hoity! What's all this talk about?" she asked, sharply, looking at her husband for an explanation.

"Mother Rachel, do you know where the stranger is who took refuge here just before Bob and I left?" asked Dick, eagerly.

"Why, what have you to do with the stranger?" asked the old woman, with clouded brow and disturbed manner.

"Nothing," replied Dick, "except it is singular he should not be in the house when his hat and coat are here."

"His hat and coat!" gurgled Rachel Bloom.

"Yes; there they are, hanging alongside the fireplace."

The old woman's gaze followed the direction of Dick's extended forefinger, and there, sure enough, were the lawyer's garments.

She comprehended the situation at once and threw a furious look at her trembling husband.

"What's the meaning of this, Isaac?" she gritted.

"I don't know," he answered. "The man was here a moment ago and now he is gone. He must have stepped outside for some purpose. I thought he had gone to the village. You know he said that he wanted to go right on, as he had an engagement to-night with a man at the Sheet Anchor."

"He can't have gone far and left his hat and coat, Isaac," said Rachel. "Do you and the boys take a lantern and search the cliff. Perhaps he may have fallen over in the dark," she added, pointedly.

"It is not impossible on such a night," replied the old man, who had now recovered his composure and was ready to fall in with his wife's suggestion.

He had been so stunned at first by the discovery of the murdered man's hat and coat, the existence of which he had forgotten in the excitement of perpetrating the crime, that but for his wife's interposition and presence of mind he would have further betrayed himself.

A lantern was lighted and Isaac, followed by the two boys, went outside and partially examined the bleak plateau in front of the cottage.

They could only do this on their hands and knees, on account of the sweep of the wind, and there was only one spot, where a row of stunted cedars bent before the gale, that they were able to approach the edge of the cliff.

It was from this place the old man had pushed the unconscious lawyer over and then sent his traveling-bag after him.

There were no signs of the missing stranger.

Dick, taking the lantern, pursued the investigation as far as the wood, but without result.

"I'm afraid he's gone to his death," Dick observed to Bob. "What could have induced him to come outside in this gale?"

"It's dead queer," replied Bob, shaking his head, solemnly.

"Shall we risk going down the path to the shore?" asked Dick. "We may find some evidence to show that he was blown from the cliff."

"Just as you say, Dick."

"Come on, then," replied Dick, who was a fearless lad. Down to the surf-swept beach they started.

It was not an easy or a safe trip even for these boys, who knew every inch of the way with their eyes shut.

The wind pinned them to the rocks one moment and the next threatened to tear them from their foothold.

However, they accomplished the short journey in safety

and presently their lantern was flashing like a will-o'-the-wisp along the beach.

"What's that?" exclaimed Bob, suddenly, pointing to an object lying between two rocks.

"Why, it's the stranger's traveling-bag!" cried Dick, when they got close to it.

"So it is. Wide open and not a thing in it. This is getting more and more mysterious. The man leaves the cottage without hat or coat, but with his traveling-bag. I don't understand what he could have been about. Do you think he was crazy?"

"I don't know; but it was the act of a crazy man."

"I should think the old man would have stopped him."

"Mr. Bloom doesn't seem to know anything about the matter."

"But when you asked him where the stranger was he said he'd gone to the village. Why did he say that if he didn't know where the man had gone, as he afterward claimed? What made him look so startled when you called his attention to the visitor's hat and coat? I hate to say what I think, Dick, but it's my opinion that the old man knows a deal more than he will admit."

"Do you mean to say that you suspect——"

Dick grabbed his companion's arm and looked searchingly into his face.

"You ought to know him better than me," replied Bob. "You've lived with him for twelve years."

"And during those twelve years I've never known him to commit any act that would bring him within the grasp of the law, else I had left him long since."

"Well, you know the reputation the Blooms bear in the village."

"I do, but, in my opinion, it's not justified. Give a dog a bad name and it will stick to him. He may have been a wrecker. I do not hold that against him, since he saved my life. But anything worse than that I'll not believe," said Dick, stoutly.

"There hasn't been much in the wreckin' line around here since yonder lightship went into commission," said Bob, glancing across the billows to where a globe of white light rose and fell in the distance. "No fear of any vessel restin' her timbers on The Cinders now, unless her helmsman was drunk and all the rest on board were crazy."

"There's been strange stories afloat about that lightship, too," said Dick, as the boys crouched beside the rocks in which the lawyer's wrecked traveling-case rested.

"That's right. Ever since that man, Peter Vandegrift, came here and took charge of her. The old crew left or were discharged, one by one, and the three who replaced them are about as hard-lookin' a set of men as I ever saw. Still, nothin' has been proved against them, and Vandegrift himself laughs at the stories."

"Well, Bob, I don't see that it's worth while remaining here any longer. There isn't much doubt but that the stranger tumbled or jumped off the cliff, and his body is tossing about somewhere in the water."

"I guess you're right," replied Smithers, getting on his feet. "Let's go."

They started upward and had accomplished half of the distance when suddenly and without warning a portion of the cliff to which Dick was clinging detached itself from its base and fell into a submerged part of the beach.

A giant roller coming in at the moment seized the boy and the undertow carried him a dozen yards from the shore.

Bob observed the catastrophe with the greatest consternation, but he was powerless to do anything for his chum.

CHAPTER VI.

SAVED FROM THE SEA.

Though the wind was blowing dead on the coast, the tide was on the ebb, and it bore Dick Adams farther and farther from the beach every moment.

He was a fine swimmer, and put up a plucky fight for his life, but the best swimmer in the world could never have regained the shore under the circumstances in which Dick found himself placed.

It would only have been a question of minutes when the boy would have had to throw up the sponge if aid hadn't unexpectedly come to him in the shape of the trunk of a tree which the waves had sucked from the beach.

A drowning man will catch at a straw, it is said, and impelled by that principle, Dick flung his arms around the tree-trunk, and throwing one leg across it clung, well nigh exhausted, for dear life.

On the top of a foam-crested billow one moment, in the hollow between two big waves the next, Dick was being drawn steadily out to sea.

The flow of the tide was carrying him in a direct line for The Cinders, where the bright eye of the lightship shone strong and clear through the darkness.

The boy had all he could do to cling on to the tree-trunk as it rose and fell in accordance with the action of the water.

But he knew his only hope was the log, and he hung on with a desperate clutch.

Time he took no note of.

It seemed to him as if he had been hours tossing about on the angry Atlantic, when, raising his head to shake the moisture from his eyes, he beheld the giant reflector of the floating light near at hand.

The dark blot right ahead he realized was the lightship. Beyond it was nothing but the broad ocean.

He had little hope but that he would be swept past the anchored vessel, or dashed to his death against its hard, oaken sides.

The Cinders shoals was some little distance to the leeward.

Another minute passed and then the stationary light was almost above his head.

He saw that he would miss the vessel by a few yards.

Suddenly the log struck something hard and he was wrenched off into the sea.

He threw up his arms, despairingly, as the water closed above his head, and his fingers came in contact with one of the chain cables by which the craft was moored.

Clutching it, the receding wave left his head momentarily above water.

He twisted his legs around the cable, which shot from the lightship into the sea like a taut tight-rope, and shinned his way up a yard or two until he was clear above the waves.

Then he had to stop for breath.

In a few minutes he began again to work his way upward, and went on for a yard or so more.

Thus by degrees he approached the hawse-hole through which the great chain passed.

His position was not even in a remote sense encouraging, for the tossing of the vessel made his hold on the chain extremely precarious, and apparently there was little hope of attracting the notice of any one on board.

As for reaching the deck of the lightship by his own efforts, that seemed well-nigh impossible.

"It's all up with me, I guess," murmured the almost exhausted boy. "I can't cling to this chain much longer. If I go any nearer to the hawse-hole I'll be crushed."

As he spoke the end of a rope, flying loose over the bows, was blown around him.

He grabbed it by one hand, recognized what it was, and taking a chance, clung with his legs alone to the cable while he tied the rope about his waist.

Then he swung himself off the chain and went slap against the vessel's bows.

The shock almost knocked the little remaining breath out of his body.

He could not fall, however, and quickly recovering himself he clambered hand-over-hand up the rope till he was able to seize the low rail above the fore-castle deck with his hands, throw one leg over it and then, as the craft rose on a huge wave, he was pitched half a dozen yards along the deck.

There he lay, gasping and drenched upon the unsteady deck for several minutes.

At last he pulled himself together and, after disengaging himself from the rope, crawled along the slippery planks to a place of greater safety.

Practically, he was now out of all danger.

Above him and close at hand was the great, glowing lantern, throwing its broad beams of light into the four quarters of the compass, and warning the mariner abroad in that neighborhood of the proximity of The Cinders shoals.

Dick sat up and rubbed the salt water out of his eyes.

Then he looked around him.

He knew well enough where he was, and breathed a silent prayer of thankfulness for his providential escape from a watery grave.

"My gracious!" he exclaimed to himself, "if I haven't had a narrow squeak for my life no one ever had. I had

about one chance in a thousand of being saved, and that one chance actually came my way. Of course, Bob has given me up for lost, and reported the fact to the old man and Mother Rachel. It's remarkable that twice in my life I have been placed at the mercy of the sea, and each time it has refused to gobble me up. I have heard it said that folks born to be hanged cannot be drowned. I hope no such fate as that is in store for me, for that would be pretty hard luck."

Dick got on his legs and started toward the cabin of the lightship.

He was rather surprised to find the deck entirely deserted.

He had always supposed that a constant watch was maintained aboard the vessel, especially in dirty weather.

"I wonder what kind of welcome I shall get from Vandegrift and his crew? I have heard strange stories about the way in which they have treated several men who found their way aboard this craft in dirty weather. I can't believe that such stories have actual foundation, in fact, else the government that maintains this floating beacon would have instituted a searching investigation. Still, I don't much fancy either Vandegrift or his three assistants. If looks alone counted, theirs would be enough to condemn them on sight. Several times Vandegrift has waylaid me in the village and tried to find out something about the Blooms. I can't imagine what his object can be. He invariably regards me, when we meet, with a kind of sarcastic leer that is not at all pleasant. To tell the truth, I'm somewhat afraid of him. Once when Bob and I approached the lightship in calm weather and asked permission to come aboard and look at the mechanism of the lantern, and see how things are run, he warned us off in threatening tones. He said it was against the regulations to permit outsiders on the vessel. Probably he was right, but he might have stretched a point where he knows us so well. Now that I have been forced to take shelter here to save my life, I don't see how he can kick."

Dick paused near the cabin door, undecided whether to enter or not.

Plucky as the lad was, he undoubtedly feared Vandegrift and his companions.

Sounds of coarse talk and laughter reached his ears as he stood there.

Evidently the four men of the lightship were all in the cabin enjoying themselves in their own way without much thought of the gale or the craft over which they had charge.

There was a short ladder nearby which led to the poop or top of the cabin.

Dick, after a moment's thought, mounted the steps and crawled to the skylight, through which gleams of light shone.

He glanced down into the cabin and saw Vandegrift and his crew seated about the mess-table, playing cards.

There was a stone jug in the center of the table, each man had a glass of liquor in front of him and a pipe or a cigar between his lips.

That they were playing for money was evident from the coin displayed.

They acted as if they were more than half drunk, though Vandegrift himself appeared to be fairly sober.

At the moment Dick looked down the three men composing the crew appeared to be greatly excited, while the skipper was quite cool.

A bunch of money lay on the middle of the table, and was clearly the stake all were contending for.

Each in turn the men threw down their cards, eagerly.

Lastly, Vandegrift displayed his, and, reaching out his hand, grasped the money and drew it toward him.

In a moment the three men sprang to their feet with fierce imprecations, and one of them drew his sheath-knife.

A row seemed imminent, and Vandegrift rose to his feet and drew his revolver.

At that thrilling moment a tremendous sea struck and heeled the lightship over to the leeward.

Dick was lifted and flung against the skylight with great force.

Crash!

He went through the glass as though it were so much paper and landed, stunned and helpless, in the middle of the table.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WOMAN OF THE LIGHTSHIP.

Vandegrift and his crew, though almost taken off their feet by the careen of the vessel, recovered themselves just as Dick came flying through the skylight, and his remarkable and unexpected entrance fairly staggered them.

It effectually put an end to the threatened scrap, and for a moment or two the occupants of the cabin could only stand and stare in astonishment at this addition to their number.

Before any move was made on their part, Dick's scattered senses came back to him and he sat up.

Then Vandegrift recognized him.

He uttered an amazed imprecation, and starting forward, gripped the boy by the arm.

"What in thunder brings you here, and how did you come?" he demanded, with a furious look in his eyes.

"I guess I must have come through the skylight," replied Dick, in shaky tones.

His answer did not satisfy Vandegrift.

"How did you reach the vessel, you pestiferous young imp?" roared the skipper of the lightship.

"Hold on, don't call a fellow names like that," objected Dick.

"Well, answer me, then! Don't you know no one is allowed aboard this craft without an order from the light-house inspector?"

"Why, do you think I came off to visit you for the fun

of the thing in such a gale as this?" cried Dick, with some indignation. "I fell from Bird Point into the sea, and the tide carried me out here."

"The tide!" gaped the four men, incredulously.

"Yes, the tide."

"Do you expect us to believe such a cock-and-bull story as that?" snarled Vandegrift.

"I don't care whether you believe it or not," replied Dick, spunkily. "I am telling you the truth and can prove it to-morrow by my friend, Bob Smithers, who saw me go into the water."

"So you swam all the way out to the lightship, more than two miles, in the sea that's running at present, eh?" said Vandegrift, sarcastically.

"I didn't say that I swam here."

"Then how else could you get here if you fell into the sea, as you claim?"

"I floated out here on a big log."

"Oh, you did?"

"I did."

"And how did you get aboard the vessel? Were you tossed aboard by that wave that hit the hulk just now?"

"No, I wasn't."

"Then, how?"

"I ran against one of your steel cables and climbed aboard."

"How could you?"

"That's the way I got aboard, just the same."

Dick was so insistent, and his face showed that he was thoroughly in earnest, that the four men were obliged to accept his statement as a fact.

"Well, we don't want you here, so you'd better go back to the shore," said Vandegrift, in an ugly tone.

"Go back to the shore—now!" gasped Dick. "How can I?"

"That's your lookout, not ours."

"It's impossible. I'm as good as a shipwrecked person, and claim your hospitality as such."

"Oh, you do?" replied Vandegrift, with a sneer. "You'd better think twice, young man."

"But it's one of your duties to help persons in distress, isn't it?"

"Don't you dare try to teach us our duty, you little runt!" thundered the skipper. "I'm running this vessel, and doing it to suit myself."

"Well, you haven't any right to refuse me shelter in such a storm."

"We'll see about that," replied Vandegrift, furiously. "Here, Sims and Yard," addressing two of his men, "seize that young sculpin, and put him into the hold."

"You won't put me in the hold, not if I know it," answered Dick, slipping off the table and grabbing the stone jug.

"Do as I tell you," roared the skipper to his two men.

They both made a dash at Dick.

The boy immediately launched the jug at the head of Yard.

It took effect in his face and stretched him stunned and bleeding on the deck of the cabin, and also had the effect of stopping Sims in his rush.

Vandegrift was furious.

"At him, Kite," he cried to the other man.

Dick made a bee-line for the deck intending to pass through the cabin doorway.

He stumbled, however, and before he could rise Sims had him by the shoulder and yanked him to his feet.

"Now we'll see who is master here, you young whippersnapper," gritted the skipper. "Down with him to the hold!"

Kite and Sims started to carry out his orders, when one of the stateroom doors flew suddenly open and a tall woman in black appeared.

"Stop!" she cried, extending her arm toward the men. "Are you not already steeped enough in blood that you would add another crime to your dark consciences? And a boy, too, at that! Back! Back! You shall not destroy him as you have others whose misfortune brought them aboard this vessel, and whom you have first robbed and then cast into the pitiless ocean."

The woman's dark eyes flashed with a strange unearthly light as she advanced to protect Dick.

Sims and Kite, though powerful and villainous looking men, seemed to be seized by a sudden panic at her presence in the cabin, and releasing their hold on the boy fell back beside the skipper.

Vandegrift uttered a fierce imprecation.

"Are you mad, Isabel?" he demanded harshly.

"Mad!" exclaimed the woman, with a bitter, almost curdling laugh. "Yes, I think I must be. Have not I passed through enough to make me so? Have not I been your prisoner for twelve long years, Peter Vandegrift? Have not I been aware of scenes that have recently passed within my hearing that have frozen the blood in my veins? Have not I begged you to set me free from your persecution, only to be laughed at as a fool because I would not consent to become your wife? Your wife! Just Heaven preserve me from such a fate! But the time will come that shall witness your punishment and my release from misery. Then will the blood you and your villainous associates have shed rise in judgment against you."

The woman's attitude and language showed that she might not be entirely sane.

"Fool that you are!" roared Vandegrift. "Even if I was disposed to save this boy, your words—irresponsible as they are—have sealed his fate. Think you that he can ever be permitted to set foot ashore to denounce us to the authorities?"

"You dare not add another crime to those you have already perpetrated."

"I dare do anything while I am the master of this vessel."

"Beware!" cried the apparently demented woman.

"Bah! I am a fool that I have put up so long with

your gibberish. I should have sent you long ago to join your husband and——”

“Why did you not?” with another bitter laugh. “Death would have been a blessed relief to my unhappy soul.”

“Well, it’s a wonder you never jumped overboard of your own accord, then, for you have had many chances to do so.”

“Yes, I have. Many a time I have gone on deck with the purpose of ending my wretched existence. Yet when the chance was mine something always held me back. Something—the face of my child.”

She bowed her head, with a sob that shook her frame convulsively, yet not a tear came into her eyes.

“My boy—my little Jack. The image of his father, who would to-day, had he lived, been the size of this——”

She looked at Dick, whose face, reflected by the lamp-light, was turned in wonder toward her.

As her eyes rested on his features she stopped short clasped her hands over her heart and gazed wildly at him for a moment, then, with a piercing scream that echoed above the uproar of the gale without, she fell on her knees before Dick and, with outstretched arms, cried:

“My child! My Jack! It is he! Merciful heavens, am I mad or do I really gaze on one who has been lost to me for twelve years? Jack, Jack! I am your mother! Your poor, persecuted, much-wronged mother. Do you not know me? You do not speak. Ah, I am mad! Mad! Mad!”

She bowed her head in her hands, and the long, pent-up tears gushed forth, while her bosom shook with frantic sobs.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAUGHT IN HIS OWN TRAP.

Vandegrift, who had uttered a terrible imprecation at the beginning of the woman’s outbreak, recovered himself, and now stood with a sarcastic smile on his rascally lips as he noted the pained and astonished expression on Dick’s face.

He saw that the boy felt assured that the woman was demoralized, and that gave him the utmost satisfaction.

Her outspoken arraignment of his villainies was therefore valueless as evidence against him or his associates.

Who would put credence in the ravings of an insane creature such as she appeared to be?

“Poor lady,” said Dick, regarding her with the utmost compassion, “I am not your son. My father and mother are dead.”

“Dead!” she echoed, raising her streaming face, and pushing her long, raven tresses aside while she bent a fascinated, wistful look on the lineaments which so excited her fancy.

“Yes. At least, they are dead to me. I know nothing about them whatever. Yet as I was washed upon this coast by the sea during a fearful gale, twelve years ago——”

“Twelve years ago!” she almost shrieked.

“Twelve years ago this very night.”

“Gracious heaven, what do I hear!” she cried. “Twelve years ago this night—the very night the Sunbeam——”

“Enough of this!” roared Vandegrift, advancing on her and seizing her by the arm. “Back to your stateroom, Isabel. Back, or by the powers above I’ll——”

“You’ll what?” exclaimed the woman, springing to her feet and bending a look of scorn and defiance on him.

Vandegrift recoiled and mumbled out something under his breath.

It was clear that even he, the master spirit on the light-ship, feared this woman that a blow from his iron fist would have stretched unconscious at his feet.

“Will you go?” he said, doggedly.

“Swear that you will do this boy no harm!” she said, in a tense tone. “Swear that you will not throw this lad to the waves! Swear that in the presence of your Maker, and I will go!”

The skipper wavered a moment and then he said:

“Very well. I swear it. But remember that for the present at least I shall hold him aboard this vessel. He cannot go ashore this night, at any rate. He shall go to-morrow—perhaps.”

The woman seemed to be satisfied that Vandegrift would keep his word.

She turned from him and again looked at Dick.

Going to him, with a manner now utterly changed from her former hysterical demeanor, she took his face between her hands and looked long and intensely into his eyes.

“I think you said that you are not my son—my little Jack. How could you be when, as I remember him, he was but a little boy, scarce five years old? And yet how like him you are, and how like—my husband.”

Dick was much affected by her manner, which seemed now to have lost all its fire, and was mournfully pathetic.

She turned away and walked slowly toward the stateroom, from whence she came, and shut the door behind her.

The skipper uttered a sigh of relief.

He stood for some moments studying the floor, then he turned to his two men.

“Here, take this man to the fo’k’sle and bring him to his senses. Then look to the light. See to it that everything goes well.”

Sims and Kite grabbed their unconscious comrade and bore him out of the cabin.

“Sit down, Dick Adams,” said Vandegrift. “Excuse my hasty temper. I am not in the best of humor to-night. I did not really intend to have you thrown overboard. Why should I? I merely meant to frighten you, that’s all, because you angered me.”

He picked up the stoppered jug and replaced it on the table.

Then after a glance at the broken skylight he stepped to the door and roared for Sims.

When the man responded he was ordered to spread a bit of sailcloth over the opening and secure it there.

"So," he said, returning and seating himself opposite the boy, "you fell into the sea from the top of Bird's Point, eh?"

"Not from the top, but half way up the cliff," answered Dick.

"It amounts to much the same thing, since it landed you in the water. And you drifted out to the lightship on a log, you say?"

"I did."

"You were lucky. Not one person in a thousand would have escaped as you did."

"That's right," admitted Dick, wondering what was going to be the end of his adventure.

"You must be chilled through after your long sousing. Come, we will have a drink together and bury all hard thoughts," with a peculiar smile. "I will get a fresh glass for you," he added, rising.

"I don't drink liquor, Mr. Vandegrift," replied Dick.

"That needn't matter. You need something to warm your chilled blood or you're likely to be down with a fever. Take it—as a medicine."

The skipper went to a locker and, fumbling awhile in it, took something out.

Then he took a glass from the swinging tray which Dick had narrowly missed in his unceremonious entrance, and said:

"Perhaps I had better dilute the gin with a little water, as you are not used to the clear article," he said, with an unpleasant smile.

He walked to the pantry, a few feet away, and entered.

"I wonder what he took from that locker?" Dick asked himself, a strong suspicion entering his mind that he was to be the victim, perhaps, of some kind of foul play. "Can he mean to poison me? Yet what motive can he have in my death? I cannot understand his attitude toward me, nor can I understand why that lady is aboard of this vessel. It is not known ashore that there is a woman on the lightship. I believe it is against the regulations, anyway. Some dark mystery seems to surround her, and all on board, for that matter."

At that moment the woman in black appeared at the door of her stateroom, looked cautiously around the cabin and then caught Dick's eye.

She held up a slip of paper, pointed at it, dropped it on the floor and retired.

Dick, somewhat surprised, ran over, picked it up and carried it back to his seat.

Glancing at it in the lamp-light, he saw the following:

"Be on your guard—drink and you are lost, unless you can manage to change the glasses—then seem to sleep."

Dick was staggered by this warning.

He saw at once that Vandegrift intended to practice some piece of treachery on him, and that the woman, probably having seen the same trick worked before on some other unfortunate, had cunningly endeavored to defeat his purpose.

The boy resolved to profit by the warning.

In a moment or two the skipper returned with half an inch of water in the glass.

He immediately filled it half full of gin.

He put about the same amount in his own glass.

"Come," he said, in a friendly way, "let's shake hands and be friends."

He held out his hand to Dick.

The lad took it, wondering how he could distract the man's attention long enough to enable him to change the glasses.

Then he noticed the lady peeping out at the door.

"Look!" he exclaimed, on the spur of the moment. "The woman is watching us."

With a smothered imprecation, Vandegrift turned and saw her furtively eyeing them.

He took a step toward the stateroom and made a threatening gesture.

Quick as a wink, Dick reversed the two glasses.

The unfortunate woman saw him do it and closed the door with a bang.

The skipper was satisfied, returned to the table and took up the glass containing the drugged liquor.

"Your health, Dick," he said, with a grin, draining the glass.

The lad drank a small portion of his, for he felt that he needed it as a stimulant.

"Drink it off," urged Vandegrift. "'Tis but a thimble-full."

Dick took another swallow, the skipper watching him, like a cat would a mouse.

"Down with the whole of it, boy. 'Twill put new life in you, and you'll sleep like a top till morning."

"I'm not used to liquor, Mr. Vandegrift. It runs like fire through my veins and makes my head spin around. It's awfully strong stuff."

"Nonsense! A third of it is water," chuckled the skipper. "Finish it and then I'll show you where you can turn in for the night."

Dick had taken about all he wanted, and so when the vessel gave a lurch to the leeward he clumsily upset the glass on the table.

Vandegrift frowned, for he was not sure that the amount Dick had drunk would have the desired effect on him.

The boy, however, fearing that a second dose might be prepared for him, began to act in a dopy way.

The skipper observed this with much satisfaction.

The drug, he thought, was getting in its work sooner than he had calculated on.

"I feel dead tired," said Dick, at length. "I can hardly keep my eyes open."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Vandegrift. "Be thankful, lad, that sleep comes to you so easy. I haven't had a sound night's sleep for——"

He paused and put his hand to his head.

"What the thunder is the matter with me? A cramp-like feeling is stealing over me. My limbs seem to—can

it be that I made a mistake in the glasses and took the wrong one myself? I noticed that the gin seemed uncommonly watery. No, it can't be that, for the boy is already asleep. Then, what makes me feel so queer? My blood is growing thick and cold. I must take more gin."

He reached for the jug, but the effort was too much for him.

"By all the powers of evil, I am drugged. I have fallen—into—my own—trap. I must——"

He fell back in his chair, glared fearfully at the ceiling, made an attempt to rise, and then collapsed.

In another moment he was insensible and breathing heavily, his legs stretched out at full length and his head thrown forward on his arm upon the table.

CHAPTER IX.

MOTHER AND SON.

As soon as Vandegrift dropped off into his drugged state, Dick Adams, who had been furtively watching him, straightened up in his chair and regarded the rascally skipper of the lightship with much satisfaction.

The storm was still at the height of its fury, and the vessel bobbed up and down, and tugged at its double steel hawsers, like some impatient tethered animal trying to break loose from its bonds.

As though the lady had also been watching the progress of matters in the cabin, the door of her stateroom opened and she came out.

She walked straight to the skipper and looked into his hard, uncompromising face, which wore a ghastly pallor under the influence of the insidious drug.

A smile hovered for an instant on her sorrowful features, and then she turned to Dick.

"I am grateful to you, ma'am, for saving me from this rascal's treachery," said the boy. "Is it true that you are—that is, aren't you in your right—I mean is there something the matter with you?" continued Dick, in an embarrassed way.

"You mean am I mad?" she replied, with a wan smile.

"I don't like to put it that way, ma'am. I hope it's all a mistake."

"I don't know," she answered. "There are times when I think I am mad. Times when I have no control whatever over myself. I have suffered, heaven knows, enough to unseat the reason of any one. Twelve years of misery has so far been my unhappy lot. When death will release me from it I know not. Why did you, the image of my own lost child, come here to this vessel? Why rather not trust your life to the waves than seek shelter in this den of wolves? The waves sometimes relent, but these men, never."

"Then the strange stories I have heard about this lightship are true?"

"What could you have heard, since dead men tell no tales?"

"Some months ago a man was washed up on the beach near our village and there found at the point of death. With his last words he accused Vandegrift of robbing him and his crew of casting him into the sea. As Vandegrift, when spoken to about the matter, declared that the sailor had never been aboard the lightship at all, and that it was preposterous to think that he or his men would attempt such a crime, the man's statement was decided to be the vagaries of a distorted imagination, occasioned by the strain through which he had passed, since there was not a particle of evidence to connect the lightship men with the affair. Before that, at intervals, the bodies of men have floated ashore, some of whom bore suspicious marks of violence, and none seemed to have been long in the water, even when no wreck had been reported in the neighborhood. What was considered as singular, not one of all these people had a single article of value, or a penny of money, on his person."

"They must have been Vandegrift's victims, for many a poor soul has given up his life on this vessel."

"And you have known this?" asked Dick, in surprise.

"Alas, yes!"

"You were brought aboard this vessel by Vandegrift?"

"Yes."

"And detained here against your will?"

"It is quite true."

"How long have you been on the lightship?"

"Three weeks."

"My gracious! The people of Oldport have not the slightest idea that you are here. Isn't it against the regulations?"

"I do not know."

"But the government tender visits this ship once a month with supplies from Macchias. How is it your presence here was not discovered?"

"Because when the supply vessel was sighted I was taken down into the hold and kept a prisoner in the little room there that Vandegrift had made for that purpose."

"But if you cried out and made noise enough, I should think some one on the tender would have taken notice."

"On that occasion I was gagged and bound."

"And at other times you are free?"

"But under constant watch. When any boat draws near, or some visitor with a permit comes aboard to inspect the light, I am put below, or locked in my room."

"Why does Vandegrift treat you in this cruel way?"

"To break my spirit and compel me to marry him. But he has failed and ever will, for I would die before I consented to link myself with such as he. Twelve years, the greater part of which I spent in a private asylum, though I was not insane, I have held out, and shall to the end."

"Why, then, does he persist?"

"Because he is a man of indomitable resolution. He swore that the day would come when I would marry him willingly, but he has found my resolution as stubborn as his own."

"Have you had no chance to escape during all these years?"

"I was constantly watched at the asylum, which was surrounded by a high wall, guarded at night by fierce dogs. Since being brought on board this vessel I have been tempted to end my miserable existence by leaping overboard, but the thought that self-destruction was an unpardonable crime, and might separate me in the next world from my beloved child and husband, who perished on this coast twelve years ago this night, when our yacht, the Sunbeam, went ashore on the rocks, caused me to pause ere I took the rash step that my cruel fate urged me on to. So I lived on and suffered."

"You've had a hard time of it."

"Alas, yes! No one knows or can understand how hard. But my consolation is that this cannot go on forever."

"I should say not, ma'am. Trust me, when I get ashore——"

"When you get ashore?" she said, mournfully. "Do you think that Vandegrift will permit you to escape him? He and his men feel that you already know too much for their safety, and that an investigation would follow did you succeed in reaching land and exposing what you have learned to the authorities. No, no; unless I can again prevent it they will kill you and toss you overboard. At any rate they will hold you a prisoner until they can dispose of you in some way."

"You seem to have considerable influence over the whole crowd," said Dick, who did not fancy the prospect that seemed to be ahead of him, "but if they should determine to put me out of the way I doubt if you could save me. Just now Vandegrift attempted to drug me for some purpose. That doesn't strike me as a favorable outlook. Now if you have the run of the cabin, as you appear to, can't you manage to find me some kind of a weapon—say a revolver—with which I can defend myself?"

"I have one in my stateroom, which I secured a day or two ago by accident, and which I thought might avail me in some emergency, should such arise. You shall have it, for I would not that you were harmed by these men for the world. You are the very image of my boy, as I fancy he would look at your age had it been heaven's will that he could have lived."

"It's funny that I should look like your little boy, ma'am," said Dick. "This is the second time to-night I have been taken for some one else."

"The second time!"

"Yes. A man, who appeared to have lost his way along the cliffs in the darkness and the storm, came to our cottage for shelter, just after we had had supper, and the moment he looked at me he started up and asked me my name, as if he knew me. When I told him he seemed to be disappointed and muttered something under his breath. I am sorry to say that it was owing to him that I am here. He left the cottage in a mysterious way, without his hat or overcoat, but carrying his traveling-bag. Bob Smithers, a chum of mine, and myself hunted the cliffs and shore for some trace of him. We found his bag a wreck among the rocks, which shows that he must have fallen from the

cliff into the sea and been swept out by the waves and lost. The same fate almost overtook me, for when climbing back to the top of the cliff the earth gave way under me and I was cast into the sea. I was saved from immediate death by a big log, and on it I floated out to this lightship, which I managed to board."

"Surely a kind Providence which preserved you from the waves will shield you from these men as well."

"I hope so, ma'am. At any rate, I don't intend to be done up without making a good fight for my life," said Dick, resolutely. "Will you tell me how you first came to get into the power of this Vandegrift? The more I know about you the better I will be able to help you, maybe if I succeed in making my escape."

"Alas! It is a sad story, which I should not wish to recall but for your wonderful resemblance to my boy. I feel that it will give me relief to unfold myself to you. It was the summer of 189—, twelve years ago, that my husband, Jack Warren, obtained reliable information of a treasure trove on a small island off the coast of Newfoundland. We lived in Boston, in fairly comfortable circumstance. My husband decided to hunt for the buried treasure, as it was said to be of the value of one hundred thousand dollars in gold."

"My goodness!" exclaimed Dick. "That's a lot of money."

"He hired the yacht Sunbeam from a wealthy friend, and, as the trip promised to be a pleasant one, he easily persuaded me to accompany him. Of course, I could not go without our little Jack."

"So your boy's name was Jack, too?" said Dick.

"Yes. He was named after his father. We called him Jack, junior," replied the lady, with a melancholy smile. "My husband was not a sailor so he hired a sailingmaster, who, most unfortunately, was this wretch, Peter Vandegrift," added the lady, casting a look of disgust and abhorrence at the sleeping skipper close to her elbow.

"Is that a fact?" exclaimed Dick, with intense interest.

"We had a pleasant run to the island where the treasure was, and the information my husband had acquired proving correct, the gold was found and removed to the yacht. Then we started for home, with visions of opulence in our minds. I had observed that this man, Vandegrift, seemed to find a great deal of pleasure in my society, which he availed himself of whenever the opportunity presented. I ascribed it to his desire to make himself as agreeable as possible to the only woman in the party, and never suspected that he had a deeper motive in view. On the night of the sixth of September, of which to-day is the twelfth anniversary, a southeast gale overtook the Sunbeam off this coast, and in spite of every effort she was driven on the rocks, a wreck. My husband went overboard before my eyes and was lost. The same fate overtook the crew. No one remained but Vandegrift, myself and my boy, and we expected to perish as soon as the yacht broke up under the assaults of the waves. Bit by bit the yacht went to pieces until only the after part, where we and the chest of

gold were, remained fixed in the rocks. Vandegrift told me to take courage, as he thought this portion of the wreck would weather the gale. Frantic over the loss of my dear husband, I could only clasp my terrified boy to my breast and expend my grief in tears. At this moment a man, who looked like a fisherman, suddenly appeared in a boat, which he secured under the lee of a rock. He was surprised to find life on the wreck, and, of course, offered to take us off. For some reason Vandegrift seemed loath to go. Finally, he reluctantly agreed, and led me to the boat, while the other man followed, with my child in his arms. I stepped in the boat, Vandegrift followed, and was in the act of taking my boy from the man's arms when a terrible wave dashed upon us. The boat was wrenched adrift and carried off, and I saw the fisherman pitched into the sea, with my child in his arms. I fainted and knew nothing more until weeks afterward, when I awoke to consciousness out of a brain fever and found myself in bed in a poorly furnished room, attended by an old woman. Vandegrift was my only visitor, and he was a frequent one. When I recovered, which I did but slowly, for all the happiness of my life had gone out with the loss of my husband and child, I found that I was on a small island somewhere along the coast. Vandegrift made no effort to take me away, and I was indifferent as to the future. Thus several months passed, during which Vandegrift was often absent. At length, one day, on his return, he proposed that I marry him, telling me that he had loved me from the first moment his eyes rested on me. I repulsed his proposal, with indignation, and then, for the first time, I requested him to take me to Boston. He refused, saying that I should remain on the island until I consented to become his wife. From that hour he afflicted me with his attentions, alternately begging me to yield and threatening me with dire consequences if I persisted in holding out. One day he drugged me, and I awoke to find myself in a private insane asylum, where I was told I was to remain until I yielded. I remained there until three weeks ago, when Vandegrift, having obtained charge of this lightship, had me secretly removed aboard, and here I have since been kept a prisoner."

Dick listened to the lady's story with the most intense interest, and he became especially excited at that point where she described the wreck which resulted in the ultimate loss of her son.

He was on the point, once or twice, of breaking in on her narrative, but managed to restrain himself.

As soon as she had concluded he seized the chance to give utterance to what was in his mind.

"There is a strange coincidence between your story of the wreck of the Sunbeam and my own history. I, too, was a victim of that same storm, twelve years ago this night. I was the only survivor, according to Isaac Bloom, a fisherman, who said he found me cast up on the rocks, near Bird Point, of some unknown vessel lost off this coast. And I was then just the age of your son—five years."

The unfortunate lady looked at him for a moment, in a dazed way.

Then she seemed to grasp the meaning of his words, and her eyes began to blaze with the same weird light that had characterized them when she first set eyes on his features in the glare of the swinging lamp.

"Merciful heaven!" she gasped. "You say you were the only survivor of a wreck on this shore twelve years ago this night and that you were then five years old?"

"Yes, ma'am, that is true."

"Then you must be my son—my own little Jack!" she cried, in frantic excitement. "You are his very image and the image of your father. But I will know the truth."

She almost sprang at the boy and began tearing open the sleeve of his shirt.

"If you are my boy, as my heart tells me you are, I shall find a scar shaped like a cross on your arm. It is a mark and could not be erased by time."

Dick, thrilled by the intensity of the situation, and quivering from head to foot at the very idea of the denouement he instinctively felt was coming, allowed her to have her way.

In a moment his arm was bare and her famished gaze fastened upon a certain spot which her mother's instinct pointed out.

It needed hardly more than a glance to show her that the peculiar scar was there where she had expected to find it.

With a scream of joy she threw her arms about his neck and pressed him to her heart.

"You are my boy—my son Jack. My darling boy, does no inward feeling prompt you to recognize your own mother? Does nothing tell you that you are my son?"

She gazed eagerly, wistfully into his face, and her words thrilled him to his very soul.

"Am I really your son?" he asked, tumultuously.

"This scar proves it to my satisfaction."

"Mother—dear, dear mother!" cried Dick, throwing his arms around her neck.

"Kind Providence! This one moment of delight amply repays me for twelve long years of suffering."

Thus in the midst of the howling storm, face to face with a common peril on board the lightship, this strangely reunited mother and son clung to each other in a long, sweet embrace, oblivious of everything save that they were together.

CHAPTER X.

A FRESH PERIL.

Their bliss was not to last long.

They were soon brought back to the terrors of their position on board the lightship.

Sims and Yard, the latter with his head bound up with a towel, re-entered the cabin at that moment.

"Hello, what does this mean?" exclaimed Yard, with an imprecation, as the two rascals took in the situation. "What

the deuce is the matter with the skipper? And these two, why are they together?"

He advanced to the table and laid his hand on the woman's shoulder.

She uttered a low cry, shrank back, but clung with all a mother's love to Dick, who sprang to his feet, and placed himself before her that he might, if necessary, protect her.

"Stand by the door, Sims," roared Yard.

Then he grabbed Vandegrift and essayed to shake him into wakefulness.

He might have saved himself the trouble, for the skipper was no better than a log.

"Wake up, cap'n; wake up!" cried the rascal. "What in thunder is the matter with the man? He can't be dead! No, he breathes; but it is thickly, like one in a trance. Boy," he continued, turning fiercely on Dick, "what is the meaning of this? What have you and this woman done to the skipper? Answer, or, by creation, it will be worse for you."

He drew a wicked-looking knife as he spoke, and there was that in his eye that showed he was in no humor to be trifled with.

"We have done nothing," replied the boy, calmly, but resolutely. "Vandegrift simply fell into a trap that he prepared for me."

"Fell into a trap! What do you mean?"

"He asked me to drink with him, and into one of the glasses he put something—a drug. Then, by mistake, he drank the dosed liquor himself, and that is the result."

"By mistake, eh?" ejaculated the rascal, with an incredulous laugh, that was ugly enough, in good truth. "'Tis not like the skipper to make a mistake of that kind. Are you sure that you did not, aided by this crazy woman, distract his attention and change the glasses? Are you sure you did not, I say?"

"I have nothing more to say," replied Dick, pluckily.

"Oh, you haven't?" sneeringly. "Well, I have. I believe you did. You hocussed the cap'n, and, by the piper, you shall pay dearly for the job. Sims, call Kite."

The third rascal quickly responded.

"Tear those two apart, d'ye hear?"

"No, no!" shrieked Isabel Warren. "You shall not part us."

"Shall not, eh? Since when have you learned to give orders aboard this vessel, my lady? The skipper may be a fool, where you are concerned, but I am not. Do as I order you, my lads."

"Mercy!" cried the poor woman, frantically. "This boy is my son."

"Your son?" laughed the rascal, mockingly. "Well, of all the crazy spells you have had this is the worst."

"No, no—I am not mad. This is the child I lost twelve years ago this night on this coast. 'Tis but this moment I fully recognize him."

"Tell that to the marines," replied Yard, scoffingly. "Do you expect us to believe such rot?"

"She's crazy," laughed Sims. "An hour since, in the

presence of the cap'n and Kite and me, she went on just the same way. Threw herself on her knees and swore this chap was her darling Jack. Ask the boy. He'll tell you she's as lunny as a moon-struck cow."

"She is not crazy!" cried Dick, angrily. "She has told you the plain truth. I am her son, Jack Warren, and she is my mother, whom I never knew till this moment."

Sims and Kite looked astonished.

"Well, have it your own way, I care not," replied Yard, brutally. "If you were her son fifty times over it would not save your life if you had as many chances as a cat. The cap'n will pass upon you when he recovers his senses. Until he does, we have a nice little room in the hold that will keep you out of further mischief. It's too bad to part a mother and her kid, but needs must when the Old Boy holds the reins. Away with him, Kite. And you, Sims, lock this woman in her room. Were I the skipper of this craft she would have long ago fattened the fishes in these waters, for of all obstacles in a man's way a woman is by long odds the worst."

Sims and Kite found it no easy matter to carry out their companion's directions, for Isabel clung with all her strength to her boy, while Dick, as we shall continue to call him for the present, made matters exceedingly interesting for them with his fists.

In the end, however, the rascals triumphed.

Isabel was carried, shrieking, to her room and locked in, while Dick fought, like a tiger, to no purpose.

Yard laughed sardonically as the boy found himself practically helpless in the grasp of the burly Kite.

As soon as Sims had turned the key on Isabel Warren, he assisted Kite in carrying his prisoner into the hold, through a trap-door in the pantry, where the boy was padlocked into the small room used by Vandegrift for securing the lad's mother below when he considered that precaution necessary for the good of all concerned.

Left in darkness and solitude, Dick felt that his position was almost unendurable.

Not that he was worried about his own fate, that he could face, for he was a plucky boy; but his intense anxiety for the welfare of his newly found mother overshadowed every other consideration.

Powerless now to aid her, he chafed in his rolling prison cell, like a freshly caught beast from the wild jungles.

He pounded furiously upon the heavy door that shut him in until he had exhausted himself, and then he sank upon the rough planks, a prey to the most dismal forebodings for the future.

The roar of the elements seemed hardly to reach his ears 'way down below the water-line, but the plunging of the vessel was easily felt.

Heretofore life had gone fairly easy with him, though it was not as satisfactory as he wished, for he longed to take his place in the great wide world and make his own way upward, as others were doing at that moment.

Now everything seemed changed.

He had just found one of his parents—his mother—of

whom he had been deprived by calamity ere he knew the blessings of existence; and scarce had he felt that mother's loving embrace and kisses than they were torn asunder and for aught he knew might never meet again.

The very thoughts of such a thing made him fairly frantic.

"If I only could escape from this place, and had some weapon in my hand, I'd cut my way through those rascals to my mother's side and there defend her with my life. Poor mother! What must be her feelings at this moment? Her screams are still ringing in my ears. Oh, if I were free there'd be something doing that would make those scoundrels open their eyes."

But there seemed to be little chance for his getting free of his own accord.

The padlocked door defied his efforts to even shake it on its hinges, and the rest of the bulkhead seemed constructed on the same principles.

An hour passed away on leaden wings.

Dick lay back on a rude bunk, trying to think of some way by which he might be able to outwit his enemies.

Suddenly an unusually heavy wave surged in from the great Atlantic and struck the vessel a fearful blow under her counter.

The extraordinary strain put upon the seaward cable fairly tore it loose from the heavy stanchion to which it was attached on board, and it disappeared like a flash into the boiling water alongside.

The lightship swung around like a cork and tugged at her remaining ground anchor.

Wave after wave now launched itself at the vessel, as though the sea, having detected its advantage, was determined by united effort to compass her destruction.

The double duty imposed on the remaining cable strained it to its utmost capacity of resistance.

Dick awoke to the fact that either the storm had increased to a remarkable extent or else something out of the ordinary had happened, for he was tossed out of the bunk by the tremendous rolling of the craft as she wallowed about in a lop-sided manner.

He heard the crash above, mingled with the momentary rumbling as the cable slipped through the hawse-hole, and he was inclined to believe that the vessel had been injured by the gale.

At one moment the lightship leaped into the air, seemingly, and the next she dropped into a hollow and gave a dogged wrench at her cable that shook her from stem to stern.

"Great Scott!" cried the boy. "One of the cables must have snapped. Unless the gale lets up soon the other is likely to go, too, and then the lightship will be thrown upon the shoal and go to pieces, or be carried upon the coast further to the westward. In either case that means death to all aboard. And must I and mother die, cooped up like a rat in a trap? I can't stand the thought. I must get out. I must, if I tear my hands to pieces trying to do it."

He staggered to his feet and dashed at the heavy door, like a mad boy.

He raised his foot to give it a kick, when, to his utter amazement he heard a sound outside, and then the door swung open and his mother appeared at the opening with a lantern in her hand.

CHAPTER XI.

AT BAY.

"Mother!" cried Dick, springing joyfully forward. "You here! How did you——"

"Come, my boy," she interrupted him in a tone of suppressed excitement, "there is not a moment to be lost. The vessel is in great peril. One of the cables has parted and she may be torn from her moorings any minute."

"I thought as much, mother," he replied, throwing his arm around her waist to steady her steps. "But the crew—where are they?"

"Like all wicked men when brought suddenly face to face with a terrible death, they are thinking now of nothing but themselves. Primed with liquor, they are on deck trying to get the lifeboat in shape for instant launching."

"No fear of them trying to save us, mother."

"No. The cravens mean to abandon their helpless captain to his fate."

"They do?"

"So I judged from their hurried and excited conversation."

Dick helped his mother up the rude ladder that led from the hold to the trap-door in the pantry deck, and in a few minutes they were standing once more in the cabin where the unconscious Vandegrift now lay, sprawled out, like a log, on the floor.

Releasing his mother, Dick sprang for the open cabin door, and slamming it shut shot the heavy bolt he noticed attached to the woodwork.

The rascals outside at least could not reach them now unless they smashed the door down, and it looked solid enough to give them a great deal of trouble.

If they themselves were doomed to die, at any rate they could die in each other's arms, and neither feared death, now that they were together.

"How did you manage to get out of your room, mother?" asked Dick, returning to her side.

"I blew the lock to pieces with a shot from my revolver," she answered, stroking his hair with a loving hand. "I was determined to save you, my son, if it cost me my life."

"What a dear, brave mother you are," replied Dick, admiringly. "The rascals evidently did not hear the shot. It was lost in the uproar of the gale. I have secured the door now so that they cannot surprise us together again. You'd better let me have the revolver. I may yet have occasion to use it."

Isabel Warren drew the weapon from her pocket and handed it to Dick.

"What shall we do if the vessel breaks her remaining anchor and goes ashore?" she asked, tremulously, as she drew him toward her.

"We can't do anything. We'll have to take our chances. The men may save themselves by taking to the lifeboat."

"Alas! my boy, I tremble to think of what our fate may be. A few hours ago I should have cared little. In fact, I think I should have welcomed death with open arms; but now, since we have been so providentially reunited, life has suddenly grown very sweet to me. I want to live and be with you, my son."

"I am so happy to find, mother, that your mind is not really affected, as I thought it was from Vandegrift's words, and your strange actions when you first came to my assistance."

"Whatever may have been my condition at times the joy of our reunion has swept the darkness all away. My mind has not been so clear for months."

At this point the handle of the door was turned and then a deep imprecation was borne to them.

The door was shaken lustily and finally a heavy kick administered to it.

Dick sprang to his feet.

Rushing to the cabin entrance he listened.

One of the rascals was outside trying to get in.

Again and again he kicked the door violently, but the stout bolt resisted his efforts.

Dick could hear him swearing and talking to himself.

At length he went away.

It was not long before he returned with one of his companions.

Both threw their weight against the door together and it shivered under the assault, but still held.

There was little doubt if they persisted that they would be able to force it, and so Dick thought he had better take some action.

He looked around the cabin for something that would answer for a barricade, but nothing presented itself.

The table and chairs were fastened to the floor.

Then he thought that the skipper ought to have a sea-chest or trunk in his stateroom, and he was about to go and see when he heard the voice of Yard say:

"Curse the door! It must have just jammed some way. We must enter through the skylight."

Dick glanced at the broken skylight, with its tarpaulin covering, and knew they could easily come into the cabin that way unless he could hold them at bay with his revolver.

That would leave him open to their own fire if they had pistols, for he would offer an excellent mark in the lighted cabin while they could keep out of his sight in the darkness above.

It is true he could douse the light, or at least turn it very low, and the latter he determined to do at once.

"They are going to come through the skylight, mother,"

he whispered, as he ran to her side. "Go into your stateroom at once and close the door."

"No, no, my son; I cannot leave you."

"But you must. Your presence here would only embarrass me. I'll hide myself in the skipper's room, for they do not know that I have escaped from the hold."

"We will both go to Vandegrift's stateroom and lock ourselves in. The lock of my door is now useless as a protection."

"I did not think of that, mother. Come on, then," and he turned the light of the swinging lamp down to a mere glimmer.

They had hardly retreated out of sight when the canvas was torn from the skylight, a couple of kicks from Yard's stout boot enlarged the opening, and then the burly rascal was seen by Dick through a crack in the stateroom door to drop himself through the hole and alight on the table.

He turned on the light again as Sims landed beside him.

"How the deuce did the light get turned down?" growled Yard, seizing a stone jug and helping himself to a big drink.

"How should I know?" replied Sims, impatiently awaiting his turn at the demijohn. "Here, don't take it all. I want some myself."

Yard handed it to him and walked over to see what was the matter with the door.

An imprecation escaped his lips.

"The door is bolted," he roared. "That she-cat must have escaped from her room."

He rushed over to Isabel's stateroom and laid his hand on the door, which opened at his touch.

"Perdition!" he exclaimed, after a glance inside, "she's out."

"Out!" ejaculated Sims, putting down the jug.

"Aye, out! The crazy thing has turned a trick on us. Where can she have gone?"

"I give it up," replied Sims.

"Ha! I have it. I'll bet she's gone into the hold to try and liberate that boy. And she'll do it, too, for the key is in the padlock."

"Why, here's a lighted lantern under the table. She must have lit that to take with her. She can't have gone yet."

"I'll see if the trap is open," said Yard, running into the pantry.

Presently there was the sound of something heavy striking the pantry floor.

In another moment Yard reappeared, with an ugly grin on his face.

"If she's in the hold, I've got 'em both trapped now," he said.

"How?" asked Sims.

"I've thrown a case of canned goods on top of the trap. That will hold it down and keep 'em below."

"Good for you!" laughed Sims.

"Come now let's get to work," said Yard. "Time is short, for the old hooker may go adrift any minute. We

want to get a case of liquor out of the skipper's room and a keg of biscuit from the pantry to put aboard the boat. You look after the biscuit while I'll see to the liquor."

"All right," replied Sims, starting for the pantry.

Yard marched straight for the door of Vandegrift's stateroom, grabbed the handle and to his surprise found it fast.

"I never knew him to lock his door before," muttered the rascal, as he shook the handle in a vain attempt to enter the room.

He went over to the unconscious form of the captain and searched his pockets.

"Confound it, he hasn't any key. The place seems to be bewitched to-night. No matter, I'll smash in the door with a hatchet or something else."

"What's the matter?" asked Sims, as his companion reappeared.

"The skipper's door is locked. I'm goin' to smash it open."

"Locked! That's strange."

"Yes. Deuced strange."

"Maybe our crazy prisoner has locked herself in there."

"Well, if she's there I'll have her out in about three shakes of a dog's tail," laughed Yard, in his ugly way.

"Do you want any help?"

"Not me. I'll have that door open in no time at all."

He seized a heavy cleaver from the wall and started for Vandegrift's stateroom.

With one blow he smashed in the whole of one panel.

Then a surprise awaited him.

Dick Adams stood facing him with a cocked revolver aimed at his head.

CHAPTER XII.

ADRIFT AND ASHORE.

Yard started back in consternation, as though he had trod upon some venomous reptile.

"Drop that cleaver!" cried Dick, sternly.

His words broke the spell that held the rascal for a moment inactive.

He was no coward, and the sight of the boy, free from his cell in the hold, made him furious.

He raised the cleaver and aimed a blow at the boy's head. Crack!

Yard uttered a hoarse cry, threw up his hands, staggered back and fell to the floor.

The shot alarmed Sims, and he came running out of the pantry.

"What has happened?" he asked, excitedly, seeing Yard trying to raise himself from the floor.

"I'm shot," groaned the ruffian.

"Shot! By that woman?"

"No—the boy. He's made his escape from the hold and is in the skipper's stateroom."

"The deuce he has. And he's got a revolver?"

"Yes. He must have found the cap'n's. Go to the fo'k'sle, you and Kite, and get your guns and shoot him down."

Sims hurried away to carry out his companion's directions.

Dick had heard every word that passed between them, and he knew that his position, at least, was fraught with great peril.

"Come, mother, we can't stay here. Better go to your own room and leave me to shift for myself."

"I can't bear to let you out of my sight," almost wailed the poor woman.

"There's no help for it. We'll be murdered if we try to hold out here, for the other two men will be back in a few moments with their revolvers. Go. I will manage some way. I don't believe they will harm you."

He forced his mother across the cabin to her own stateroom, then he went to the badly wounded man and wrenched the cleaver from his grasp.

Yard, faint as he was, cursed him, but Dick paid no attention to his language.

He dragged Yard across the cabin to the pantry and then he once more shut and bolted the cabin door, turned low the light and awaited developments.

It wasn't long before there was a noise at the door.

Sims and Kite found themselves locked out.

Guided by former experience, Sims made no attempt to force the door, but led the way to the skylight.

Both rascals looked cautiously down into the dim cabin, but they could see no one but the senseless captain.

Dick was hiding in the pantry.

"Where the dickens has Yard gone to?" exclaimed Sims. "I left him wounded on the floor, yonder, now he's not there. I can't——"

The lightship gave a vicious plunge at that moment and the speaker lost his balance.

He pitched headfirst down on the table, rolled off on the floor and lay quite still.

His revolver flew from his hand and struck near the pantry door.

Dick, peering through a crack as he held the door ajar, saw, with great satisfaction, the fate that had overtaken the second of his three enemies.

That left only one, the man Kite, to face, and the brave boy felt that he could hold his own with him.

Kite evidently hesitated to enter the cabin alone, for he knew the young prisoner had a revolver, and he didn't want to share Yard's fate.

Dick watched in vain for him to put in his appearance.

And while he waited another tremendous sea struck the vessel, lifted her like a cork and then threw her on her beam ends, almost dousing the lantern.

Dick was thrown violently to the floor and half stunned.

He thought he heard a cry from above as he went down, but it passed so quickly that he was not sure.

The lightship now began to act differently to what she had done before.

She no longer tugged at her steel cable.

It had parted and the vessel was now adrift, at the mercy of the storm.

Dick soon woke up to that fact from the sense of motion that he was conscious of, and the rolling of the craft in the trough of the seas.

He gave no further thought to Kite, but rushed across to his mother's room.

"We're adrift," he said, in some excitement. "Come out. We have only one of the rascals to fear now, for the other fell through the skylight and lies stunned on the floor. I don't think his companion will bother us now. He'll have enough to do to try and save himself."

"Where are you going?" she asked, anxiously.

"On deck, to see how things are likely to shape themselves."

"Then I'll go with you," she said.

"No, mother. It is too dangerous for you to venture. A sea is liable to come aboard any moment and sweep you overboard."

"But yourself?"

"Oh, I can hang on to a rope. Remember what I've been through to-night and escaped."

Reluctantly she permitted him to leave her, and Dick, after handing her Sims's revolver, and telling her to keep an eye on him in case he should recover his senses, left the cabin.

The lightship was now wallowing in the seas, her lantern swinging around in a circle, but still shining as clear as ever.

The after part of the deck, where the skylight was, showed tolerably plain in the glow at times, and the first thing the boy did was to look for Kite.

He was not to be seen anywhere.

"Great Christopher! I believe he was washed into the sea when that giant wave swept the deck and tore the vessel loose from her moorings. That must have been his cry I heard. If he went overboard his goose is cooked by this time, I guess. Mother and I seem to be the only able survivors left."

At that moment he saw his mother standing at the cabin door.

He went to her at once.

"You must not come on deck, at least just yet. The third man of the crew is not in sight, so I think he's been washed overboard."

"A just retribution is overtaking them all," she replied. "Sims, who fell through the skylight, is dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed Dick.

"He broke his neck."

"My gracious! Then the only ones left are the unconscious Vandegrift and the chap I wounded."

"Where are we now?" she asked.

"Drifting westward and in toward the coast."

"We have missed The Cinders, then?"

"Yes. We're bound to go ashore somewhere before sunrise. If we strike the rocks I'm afraid it will be all day with us. Our only chance will be to hit a stretch of sandy beach, in which case we may perhaps stand a fair chance of getting ashore."

"And what is to become of these two men—Vandegrift and Yard?"

"What do you care, mother? Haven't you suffered enough at their hands to wish them no good fortune?"

"I have, my boy; but at this terrible crisis I cannot find it in my heart to wish them worse off than they are now. We ourselves know not if we can escape. It is our duty to forgive our enemies."

"You can forgive them if you want, mother, but I'm not going to endanger our chances of salvation in order to look after them. Vandegrift is the cause of most of your misery, and I think I see his finish, all right."

Nothing more was said.

Isabel Warren stood at the door while Dick took sights at the shore from the roof of the lantern-house.

Both the wind and the tide were carrying the lightship in a slanting direction on the coast, and she was bound to strike the shore somewhere in the course of an hour.

Dick had no idea what time it was, but he judged it must be well along toward morning.

"I believe the gale is breaking," he said to his mother when he rejoined her.

"I see little difference in it."

"Don't you notice that the sky is clearing? I am sure it isn't blowing as hard as it was."

"It's blowing hard enough to make our situation sufficiently perilous."

"That's true enough. But take courage, mother. Somehow or another I feel it in my bones that we're going to escape."

"I hope so," she answered, fervently.

Dick feeling that there was nothing for him to do at present re-entered the cabin.

He looked at Sims and saw that the man was dead beyond a doubt.

"He's gone to judgment with all his sins on his head. I'd hate to be in his shoes."

He dragged the body into the skipper's room and covered it with a blanket from the berth.

Then he took a look at Vandegrift, whom he straightened up as well as he could.

He showed no signs yet of coming to.

"I'm afraid your name is Dennis unless this vessel runs into uncommon luck," said Dick, feeling a trifle sorry for the rascal.

Last of all he visited Yard in the pantry.

That ruffian was suffering considerable pain from his wound and he was in a fierce humor.

"Surprised to see me still alive?" said Dick, standing before him. "Your two companions have gone to their doom, and you and the skipper are the only ones left, except my mother and myself. The chap you sent to the fore-

castle, with orders to get his revolver, fell through the skylight trying to get into the cabin and broke his neck, the other fellow was washed overboard. The lightship is drifting fast on shore, and if she strikes on the rocks you ought to know what will happen. If you take my advice you'll repent——"

"Repent be jiggered!" snarled Yard, glaring at Dick.

"If you don't you're liable to regret it," replied the boy.

"Shut up! I want no psalm-singing remarks from you, d'ye understand? What I do want is a drink of water, and I want it bad. My throat is burning up."

Dick got him a cupful of water and he drank it like a famished hyena.

"I'm sorry I had to shoot you, but I had to or——"

"Well, you ain't half as sorry as I am about the matter."

"Where did I hit you?"

"In the chest; but I reckon I'll pull through if I have half a chance."

"Your chance depends on whether you ever reach the shore alive."

"Well, what's the odds?" replied Yard, with careless bravado. "I can't die more than once, and I'm bound to do that some time. If we're both saved I guess you'll see to it that I go to the jug, so I don't see that it matters much how things turn out."

As Yard was in no shape to prolong the conversation, Dick made him as comfortable as he could and left him.

Then he went on deck again.

The lightship was now close in shore, and to the boy's great joy she was heading for a sheltered cove.

Ten minutes later she was swept safely past a bunch of dangerous-looking rocks, the tide swung her around into the entrance to the cove, and a moment afterward she grounded her nose on a shelving beach of hard sand, where there was comparatively little surf.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE COVE.

It was phenomenal luck that had carried the vessel into the little haven hollowed out by nature in the rugged stretch of cliffs.

The gale, which was still strong was hardly felt inside the cove, and the sudden transition from the tumbling sea and howling wind to comparative rest and silence brought Isabel Warren to the door of the cabin in bewildered surprise.

The vessel still rocked, it is true, from the action of the big waves rolling into the mouth of the cove, but the movement was as nothing compared to what it had been a few moments before.

The glowing lantern at the top of the lightship's single short but stocky mast made the cove almost as light as day.

Isabel gazed around in astonishment.

It did not seem possible to her that the vessel had reached the shelter of the shore without mishap.

"Mother," cried Dick, running toward her, "we're safe after all. The lightship has drifted into a sheltered spot in the cliffs, and all danger is over."

"Thank Heaven for that," she murmured.

"There must be a strong tide setting into this place, otherwise I don't see how we came to hit it so nicely. Talk about luck—this is the best ever. Why even the vessel will be saved to the Government comparatively uninjured."

"How can we reach the top of these cliffs?"

"I think there's a rocky path yonder, but am not sure. When daylight comes we will be better able to decide that question."

They returned to the cabin and then Dick suggested that between them they had better try to carry Vandegrift to his bunk in his stateroom.

This was accomplished after some difficulty, for the skipper was a heavy man, and he lay a dead weight in their arms.

"Now you'd better lie down and rest, mother, until daylight comes. Then we'll try to make our way up the cliff."

Isabel consented to do this, as she was really wearied after the excitement through which she had passed that night.

Dick, after looking in on Yard and finding him in a kind of stupor, sat down in one of the cabin chairs and presently fell asleep.

It was broad daylight when he awoke, and looking at the chronometer saw that it was seven o'clock.

He went to his mother's stateroom and found her still asleep.

"She looks tired, poor mother," he murmured lovingly.

"It would be a pity to arouse her yet."

So he did not disturb her but proceeded out on deck.

The lamps in the lantern were still burning as a matter of course.

Going into the lantern house he saw how the ponderous light was raised and lowered by the machinery.

Pulling a lever which he judged controlled the lantern it slowly sank into its place inside the house.

Then he extinguished the lamps one by one.

After that he viewed the sides of the amphitheater enclosing the cove all but its entrance by a wall of rock.

He soon saw that there was no way of reaching the top of the cliffs from the cove.

Their sides rose sheer and straight out of the water to a height of fifty or sixty feet.

A small rowboat lashed on deck suggested a way of leaving the cove.

Dick quickly cut its lashings, turned it over, attached the ropes connected with the falls, and by hoisting at each in turn he succeeded in lifting the light boat above the vessel's bulwark and over her side, where he allowed it to remain for the present.

Then he paid a visit to the wounded man, who seemed to be resting easier.

Yard looked at the boy in sulky silence.

"You can thank your stars that you're not going to the bottom this trip," said Dick. "The lightship has gone ashore in a cove and is safe. You'll be in a doctor's care pretty soon; but I guess your wound is not as serious as I supposed. Do you want anything?"

"Yes. If there's any more gin in that stone bottle give it to me," answered the man.

Dick brought the jug to the pantry, and gave him half a glassful of the liquor.

That seemed to revive him greatly.

"Where's Vandegrift?" he asked.

"Sleeping off the drug."

"The others you said were——"

"Dead."

"Humph! What are you going to do with me and the skipper?"

"Turn you both over to the authorities."

"On what charge?"

"You ought to know what you're guilty of."

"There ain't no proof against us."

"My mother's story ought to be sufficiently strong to hold you both. Besides, you made several attempts on my life."

The man scowled and remained silent.

Dick rummaged around the pantry and found plenty of eatables.

After satisfying his hunger he went back to his mother and aroused her.

After persuading her to eat a little in order to sustain her strength, he took her out on deck.

The sun was shining brightly in a clear sky, the wind had firmed down to a fresh breeze, but the water was still a bit roughish.

"We can't climb the cliff, mother. That, however, doesn't much matter as we have a light rowboat that will take us off. Now the question is what will we do about Vandegrift? I propose to turn him over to the authorities on the charge of ordering his men to throw me overboard in last night's storm after I had sought shelter on board the lightship. I shall also charge him with attempting to drug me after you had interfered in my behalf. As your presence on board the vessel will have to be explained, your story is bound to involve him and his wounded associate in a very serious predicament."

"I'll leave the matter to you, my son. All I care for is to be rid of that wretch forever."

"That you shall be, mother. He will no doubt be sent to prison for many years, if not for life."

"He has not yet revived from his stupor, has he?"

"No. He may come to at any moment however. It will be advisable to bind him hand and foot before we leave the vessel. As the other chap is wounded I think we ought to take him with us, so that a doctor may attend to him as soon as possible."

After some further conversation, during which Dick said he proposed to row the boat back to Oldport, which could not be very far to the eastward, they went into the cabin

and assisted Yard, who was able to walk a little, into the swinging boat at the davits.

Dick and his mother, each laying hold of the falls, completed the lowering of the boat.

Then the boy went to the skipper's room and bound the unconscious Vandegrift hand and foot in a secure manner and left him.

Returning to the deck Isabel and her son got into the boat, shoved off and were presently out on the bosom of the ocean, headed for the village of Oldport.

CHAPTER XIV

STRANGE HAPPENINGS AT BIRD POINT.

The row back to Oldport proved to be a much longer one than Dick had supposed, and it was noon when they rounded the point that opened up the village.

There was a good deal of excitement in the place over the disappearance of the lightship, and word having been sent to the district inspector who was at Macchias, a revenue cutter, which had put in there the afternoon before, had been sent out to look for her.

The cutter was coming into the little bay in quest of chance information when the boat made her appearance.

Dick signalled her and pulled alongside.

Boarding the cutter he asked to see the officer in charge.

Conducted into his presence the boy told him where the lightship would be found.

He then made a brief explanation of the main circumstances of the case, which rather astonished the officer.

"I'll have to detain you and your mother until the inspector passes on the matter," he said. "Ask her to step aboard. Our surgeon will attend to your prisoner, and I will relieve you of him."

The boat was taken on board and the cutter was headed down the coast with Dick on the quarter deck to point out the entrance to the cove.

The place was soon discovered and the lightship was found as Dick had described.

Vandegrift was brought aboard the cutter entirely recovered but in a villainous humor.

As Isabel had told a portion of her sad story to the officer, the rascally skipper of the lightship was haled before him and put through a course of sprouts that resulted in his being handcuffed and confined below.

A hawser was made fast to the lightship and she was towed down to Macchias.

Dick and his mother were taken ashore and carried before the inspector, to whom they told their stories.

As a result Vandegrift and Yard were brought ashore and put in jail to await the action of the United States authorities.

Dick secured temporary quarters for his mother in Macchias, and then started that evening for Oldport, largely

to surprise Bob Smithers and the Blooms, but more particularly to allay his sweetheart's distress over the report of his death which he knew must have reached her by this time.

He made the short trip on horseback and appeared before Samuel Baker's door about eight o'clock.

Mrs. Baker, who answered his knock, threw up her hands with a shriek on seeing him and fainted.

That brought the retired fisherman to the door in short order, and he was astonished at beholding the boy whom he supposed to be food for the fishes.

"Dick Adams, is it really you?" he ejaculated.

"Looks like me, doesn't it?" said Dick, cheerfully. "Been making arrangements for my funeral? If you have you'll find a pretty lively corpse on your hands."

"Come right in, Dick. We've all been broke up over you, especially Lou. She's in her room now inconsolable. Just wait here till I break the news of your return to her. But first of all I must attend to my wife. You must have startled her out of her seven senses."

"Took me for a ghost, I suppose."

"She certainly did not expect to see you alive again."

"Bob Smithers has been here, of course."

"Yes, he was here this morning. Said you fell from the Point into the sea in last night's storm and were carried out into the Atlantic. How in thunder did you manage to save yourself?"

"I did it all right. It has proved the luckiest accident that could have happened to me."

"How could that be? Wasn't you nearly drowned?" said Mr. Baker, as he saturated a cloth with ammonia and held it to his wife's nostrils.

"Surely I was; but I'll tell you my story by and by."

Mrs. Baker soon came to her senses, and was overjoyed to find that it had been no ghost but Dick in the flesh she had seen.

She decided that it would be better for her to carry the news to Lou, and she did so.

Inside of five minutes the girl was sobbing in Dick's arms, while her parents looked on with evident satisfaction.

"How did Bob take it?" asked Dick as soon as Lou was composed enough to sit down.

"He's all down at the mouth," replied Mr. Baker.

"And the Blooms?"

"Can you stand a shock, Dick?" asked the ex-fisherman solemnly.

"A shock! What do you mean?"

"Terrible things have happened at the Point since last night."

"Good gracious! Explain."

"Rachel Bloom is dead to begin with."

"Dead!" gasped Dick.

"Yes. She fell over the cliff this morning and was killed."

"Great Scott!"

"And Isaac Bloom was found senseless on the edge of the cliff. The doctor says he had a stroke of apoplexy. At

any rate he is lying at the cottage in a precarious condition."

"My gracious!"

"That isn't all."

"What else is there?"

"It's about a stranger that called at the Bloom cottage last evening."

"I know. I let him in just before Bob and I came over here last night. When we returned to the Point we found he had left the cottage for some purpose, with his traveling bag but without his hat and coat. We hunted for him, found his bag among the rocks of the shore, and judged that he had fallen from the cliff into the sea. It was while Bob and I were climbing back to the cottage that a portion of the cliff gave away and dropped me into the water."

"Yes. We know all the particulars from Bob. Well, that man wasn't lost after all."

"Not lost!"

"No, though it is a fact that he went over the cliff as you and Bob supposed."

"How then did he escape?" asked Dick, in some astonishment.

"He was caught in a clump of bushes that grows on a ledge along the face of the Point and lay unconscious all through the night. It appears to be certain that he was discovered there this morning by Rachel Bloom, for Bob, who was in bed at the time, heard her call her husband and speak to him in an excited way. Both then left the cottage. Bob dressed himself and followed them outside to see what was the matter. When he reached the edge of the cliff near the row of stunted cedars he found Isaac Bloom lying on the ground in a kind of fit. There was no sign of Rachel. Looking down he discovered the stranger, who appears to be a Boston lawyer named John Fisher, on the ledge. He also discovered to his horror Rachel lying on the rocks thirty-odd feet below. He carried Isaac to the cottage, got a rope and sliding down made it fast about the man's body. Then he pulled him up and tried to revive him, but couldn't. Neither could he bring Isaac to his senses, so he hurried to the village for help and a doctor. The doctor said Isaac was in a dangerous state and ordered him put to bed. The man Fisher he revived after much trouble. He appeared to be so stupid that the doctor decided he was under the influence of some drug. Then Bob told his story about the man's singular disappearance the night before which led to your supposed death, and the general impression prevailed that the stranger, whose presence in the neighborhood seemed singular, had deliberately attempted to commit suicide. This idea was subsequently dispelled by the man himself when he had fully recovered. He said that after drinking with Isaac and Rachel Bloom, previous to retiring to a couch which had been prepared for him in the living room, he had been taken with a strange feeling of dizziness which culminated in his losing his senses. This statement led some of his hearers to suspect the Blooms of treachery. A search of the room revealed a bottle of choral, and one of the three glasses used showed

traces of the drug. It was then believed that the Blooms had drugged and robbed the stranger, who admitted having had a large sum of money in his traveling bag, and pitched him over the cliff. A further search brought to light a roll of bills, \$1,000 in all, hidden in a mattress in the sleeping room. This money was identified by the stranger as his. That settled all doubts. Everybody believes that Rachel discovered the stranger hanging on the ledge this morning, she and her husband tried to complete the tragedy which had providentially failed the night before, and that Rachel lost her balance some way and fell to her death. This tragedy then brought on Isaac's fit."

Dick listened to this story in great amazement.

Never had he suspected the Blooms as being capable of such wickedness.

He had always sturdily defended their reputations when attacked in his presence, and as there was no evidence against them he had had the best of the argument.

Now he was simply paralyzed by the disclosure which was backed up by incontestable proof.

"By the way, Dick," went on Mr. Baker, "I think you'd better postpone your story for the present, much as we are anxious to hear it, and go on to the cottage at once."

"Why so?"

"Well, the fact is Isaac Bloom is continually calling for you. Bob, who is at the cottage looking out for him, hasn't dared to tell him that you are dead. He says the old man knows that he is dying and wants to tell you about a legacy that is coming to you. Bob can't make head or tail out of his ravings, but he told me that you mentioned to him last night that Isaac Bloom once said something to you about a pot of money, and he thinks that is what is on the old man's mind."

"He did mention something about a pot of money, but that was all," admitted Dick. "I don't see how he can know anything about such a thing for I've seen precious little money in the cottage during the twelve years I lived there."

"You'd better go to the cottage at once, for Isaac is liable to die at any moment. The old man's persistency in wanting to see you makes me believe there is something important in the wind. At any rate you'll be able to give your chum a pleasant surprise, and if there's nothing in the old man's desire to see you no harm will be done."

"All right, sir, I'll start at once. When I come back I've got a story to tell you that will astonish you not a little."

With those words Dick put on his hat and left the Baker home.

CHAPTER XV.

THE POT OF MONEY.

Perhaps Bob Smithers didn't nearly have a fit when Dick Adams walked into the cottage unannounced.

His eyes opened very wide in a startled way, and stuck out from his head like those of a lobster.

For the moment he was almost frightened to death, taking his chum for a spook.

Dick soon relieved him of his momentary terror, and convinced him that he was good flesh and blood.

"How did you save yourself, Dick?" he asked eagerly. "I was certain that you were lost for good and all."

"I'll tell you after awhile. How is the old man? I've been told that he has been asking for me right along."

"So he has. I could hardly keep him in bed at times. In fact if it wasn't that he's partly paralyzed he'd have got up in spite of me."

"Is he awake now?"

"I left him in a doze a few minutes ago."

"Is he off his head?"

"I guess he must be. He talks of nothing but you, a pot of money, some yacht called the Sunbeam——"

"What!" exclaimed Dick. "A yacht called the Sunbeam?"

"That's right," nodded Smithers.

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Dick. "What can he know about the Sunbeam?"

"How can I tell?"

"This is important," cried Dick, springing to his feet.

"How so?" asked Bob in surprise.

"You shall know by and by. I must see him right away."

"Well, go inside. He's lying on his bed in the sleeping-room."

So Dick went in followed by Bob.

Isaac Bloom lay pale and wan on the bed, and the stamp of death was on his features.

He was breathing heavily.

The big cat, the old man's favorite, was perched contentedly on the footboard, and he blinked sleepily at the two boys as they approached.

At that moment Isaac began to rave in an audible tone.

"Dick Adams! Dick Adams!" he muttered. "Where are you? Why don't you come? In a little while it will be too late and your legacy—the pot of money which is rightfully yours, and yours only—will be found and appropriated by strangers. I can't bear the idea of such a thing. It is yours, Dick, and you must have it."

"That's the way he talks all the time," whispered Smithers.

"Dick Adams. That's the name I gave you, but it isn't your right name. No, no. But I didn't want anybody to know your real one for fear it might serve as a clue to the loss of the Sunbeam and the money I found aboard of her."

Dick nearly stopped breathing so great was his excitement.

Clearly Isaac Bloom knew a good deal about the loss of the yacht so directly connected with his own history.

He must be made to tell all he knew, though what more could he tell than Dick had already from his mother?

Still there seemed to be some mystery that the boy wanted unraveled.

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled the dying man in a grizzled kind of way. "You'll never learn anything about that gold from me, Peter Vandegrift, though you persevere until doomsday. No, no; the money is not for you. It's Dick's—all Dick's. Every shining piece belongs to him, for it was his father's, and what belonged to the dead father is the property of the living son."

"My gracious!" breathed Dick. "I begin to see a light. He's talking about that treasure trove that father found, and which mother supposes was lost in the sea. He must have found it. When he fell into the water with me in his arms he swam to the shore and we were both saved. Afterward he returned to the wreck, found the chest of gold and brought the money to the cottage and hid it. Why did not he branch out with all that money, like anybody else would have done, and live like a lord?"

As if in answer to the boy's thoughts the old man mumbled:

"Ah, gold is a grand thing to have. Rachel loves it, so do I. We never can get too much of it. But it mustn't be spent. No, no; for two reasons—because we love to take it from its hiding place and handle it, and count it over and over again, and look at it; and because it belongs to Dick, and we dare not spend one shining piece, for Rachel and I love the boy and would not rob him. No, no; we will rob anybody else but not Dick. Still he mustn't have that money till we are both dead. We could not part with it till then. No, no; we could not part with it. It is our joy, our very life. When we are gone Dick shall do with it as he chooses. He'll live like a gentleman in a grand house. He's a good boy. Too bad that he lost his father and his mother. But is his mother dead? Vandegrift must have saved her, for he saved himself. But he's very close. He won't say a word about it. He is a great villain, and now is cap'n of the lightship."

All this would have made Dick simply wild if he had not already met his mother and was able to comprehend the meaning that underlay the old man's ravings.

"So you think Dick is the boy, do you, Vandegrift? But you don't know for certain. You never will know. Softly, Rachel, this man Fisher must go over the cliff. He must not see Peter Vandegrift at the Sheet Anchor, else something might develop that would turn suspicion our way. He recognized the boy, Rachel. You saw it, didn't you? He is dangerous to us; besides he has money in his bag, and we must have it. He will be carried to sea for the tide is running out. No one will ever know. When the boys return I'll tell them he went on to the village. Ha! His coat and hat! The boy looks at me so suspiciously. Can he suspect the truth? What a fool I was not to think of them and throw them after the body as I did the bag. Ah! Rachel is clever. She'll get me out of the hobble. Yes, yes, of course I'll get the lantern and look for him. He must have walked outside in his sleep. He, he, he!"

Suddenly Isaac Bloom awoke, started up in bed and glared wildly around.

His eyes rested on Dick.

"Ha! You have come at last—at last. Good boy. You will now get your legacy—the pot of money. Lucky boy," with a chuckle. "It's a fine legacy. One hundred thousand dollars in gold. In gold, boy—think of that. And every shining piece is yours—all yours, Dick. I see you look incredulous, eh? Ha, ha, ha! Didn't think that poor old Rachel and me, who have always lived like beggars, he, he, he! were rich? Of course not. How could you? We never told a word. We kept it very close. Very close indeed. We didn't want you to know, for then you wouldn't support us. You'd want us to spend our money. Then you'd leave us and go out into the world to make your way ahead, as you told me. Well, it's all yours—a whole pot of glittering shining money. Every bit of it gold. What a fine time you'll have spending it. But then I'll be dead and won't know anything about it. Poor Rachel is already dead. We tried to shove the lawyer down on the rocks this morning and Rachel lost her footing and went over. It is a judgment on us both, and now I am dying, too. But you shall see this pot of money now, and I will take my last look at it too."

Dick had often noticed what seemed to be a fancy worsted bell-rope hanging at the head of the old couple's bed, and he had wondered what it hung there for, but his curiosity had never impelled him to monkey with it.

The dying miser now seized it in his trembling fingers.

"Look!" he exclaimed, giving the rope a tug.

To the amazement of Dick and Bob a nicely-adjusted panel slid noiselessly upward showing a recess in the wall.

A three-legged iron pot full of glittering coin stood exposed.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

"Oh, gracious! What a lot of money!" cried Smithers, his eyes protruding once more to their fullest extent.

At that moment the old man uttered a gurgling rattle in his throat, the worsted rope slipped out of his nerveless fingers, and the panel slid back into its former position.

The boys instantly turned to the bed where the miser-fisherman lay white and still, his eyes wide open and his jaw dropped.

Dick advanced and looked closer.

"It's all over with him," he said, slowly with some emotion. "He is dead."

"He went off mighty quick," replied Smithers.

"It's just as well since he couldn't recover. In fact it is better as it is, for had he got well he would have been sent to prison for his attempt on John Fisher's life. Where is the lawyer now?"

"In bed with a fever at the Sheet Anchor."

"His visit to this place seems like the work of fate."

"How do you make that out?"

"If he hadn't come nothing probably would have happened, and then I shouldn't have discovered my mother."

"Discovered your what?" ejaculated Bob, looking at his chum as if he thought he was joking.

"I forgot, you haven't heard my story yet."

"You're fooling, ain't you, about your mother? How could you find your mother since you fell down the cliff? Besides, you told me that you guessed your mother and father were lost the night you were washed ashore from some wreck."

"You'll have to have patience, Bob. You'll learn all in good time. Hand me that towel yonder, so I can tie up the old man's jaw."

Bob did so.

Dick then laid the old man's hands by his side and covered his head and all with the coverlid.

"Now I'll take the cat with me down to the Bakers'. It won't do to leave the animal here with the dead man."

"Why not? What is the difference? The old man liked the animal."

"Well, I've always heard that it was not the right thing to leave a cat near a dead body, that's all I know about it, so I'm going to walk Master Tom off."

"Say, Dick, what are you goin' to do about that money in the wall? Somebody might jerk that bell rope for fun, then they'd discover the pot of gold, and you'd never see it again."

"Don't worry, I'll be on hand here after I tell my story to the Bakers. You and I, and perhaps Mr. Baker, will watch in the cottage to-night. I've got the keys of the place, and everybody will recognize my right to boss matters. Don't you say a word yourself about that money."

They soon reached the Baker home where Dick reported the death of Isaac Bloom.

Then Dick, in the presence of Bob and the Baker family, told the story of his adventures during the night, concluding with the revelation made by the old man just before his death which made him, Dick, the heir of \$100,000 in gold coin.

To say that his auditors were amazed at all they heard would but faintly describe the effect produced upon them by Dick's narrative.

"Then you're not Dick Adams after all," blurted out Bob, "but Jack Warren?"

"That's about the size of it," laughed Dick. "But what's in a name? I shall always be the same Dick that you and Lou and her father and mother have known up to this moment. I have changed by name, or rather I have resumed my right one, but I hope I haven't changed my nature. Isn't it all the same to you, Lou, whether I'm Dick Adams or Jack Warren?" looking at his sweetheart.

"Just the same, Dick—I mean Jack," as she corrected herself with a little laugh.

"And how about you, Bob?"

"I don't care as long as you're the same old Dick."

"I'm going to bring mother to-morrow from Macchias," said Dick, "and I want you to give her a royal welcome.

She has suffered as few women have, I think, and I shall make it the duty of my life to try and repair her twelve years of misfortune."

"And I will help you, Dick," replied Lou, placing her hand on her boy lover's shoulder.

Dick, Bob and Mr. Baker spent the night at the Bloom cottage on the Point.

Next morning Dick brought his mother to the village and introduced her to the Bakers, who insisted that she must make their house her home as long as she wished.

On the following day Isaac and Rachel Bloom were buried side by side in the village churchyard, and Dick eventually placed suitable headstones to mark their last resting places.

Dick and his mother visited John Fisher at the Sheet Anchor that afternoon and the lawyer was the most surprised as well as delighted man in the village when he recognized the supposedly dead wife and son of his old friend and client Jack Warren.

In due time Vandegrift and Yard were tried in a United States court, convicted and sent to prison for a goodly number of years.

Vandegrift died within a year and Yard is still serving his time.

As for Dick, now Jack Warren, he and his mother soon afterward went to Boston, and made their home there, the boy going to an academy, whence he graduated into Harvard College.

Soon after he received his degree he was married to Lou Baker, and the young couple, with Isabel, went to house-keeping on their own account.

Jack went into business for himself, and took Bob in as a clerk, but notwithstanding the social and financial difference between them they are still chums as of yore.

Bob works like a Trojan, for he says that he means to earn a pot of money for himself before many moons, and we have no doubt but he will succeed in this respect.

To-day Jack, his young wife and his dearly loved mother make one of the happiest households in the city of Boston, and Bob Smithers is always on hand to complete the family circle.

They often talk about the old days at Oldport, but the topic that most interests Bob is the Pot of Money, the Legacy of a Lucky Boy.

THE END.

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